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Love Stories of the American Gir

OCT. 4

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The Shadow of the Past

By Mrs. Harry Pugh Smith

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AUTUMN DREAM

SOFT flutter of gay birds southward winging,
Shifting sunlight in a misty haze,
Cool breezes the red-gold leaves a-flinging
Through the splendid early autumn days—
Dear one, do you know my heart is singing,
All because of you and love's dear ways?
Dear one, do you know autumn is bringing
Dreams-come-true and joy that stays and stays?

—Peter A. Lea

The Shadow of the Past

Pride's armor of scorn hid a tortured soul when love fought a specter from the past for the heart of The Notorious Norma!

By MRS. HARRY PUGH SMITH

NORMA was aware of the pickpocket the moment he touched her hand bag. She was sensitive to any touch; besides, the fumbling fingers were awkward.

Her gloved hand shot down and clamped about the wrist of the thief. He struggled vainly to get away, but for all her slenderness the girl had the strength and muscles of a trained athlete; not for nothing had she ridden horseback and golfed all her life. Her captive squirmed helplessly in her grip of steel. The station was crowded, and in the general confusion she and her prisoner escaped notice.

"Well, my friend?"

She turned and faced him. He was only a boy, a white-faced, haggard boy. He did not cringe, but stood there staring at her wretchedly.

"Same old story, I suppose?" she demanded scornfully. "Hungry and broke, and a long way from home?"

He shivered, but said nothing.

"New at the business, too, aren't you?"

Still he made no reply.

"This was the first pocket you ever tried to pick?"

Trembling, he maintained his stubborn silence.

There was no way of avoiding the meeting now. He was standing before her. "May I have this?" he asked

"What did you mean to do with the money?"

"Buy a ticket home," he said hoarsely. "I—I ran away and—my mother's ill"—he choked—"dying."

"How old are you?"

"Sixteen."

"Of course I've got to turn you over to the police and you'll go to jail and all the rest of your life you'll be a jail bird."

His head dropped. A wry smile flitted across her lovely, painted face, with its defiant mouth.

"That's the way criminals are made, you know," she said harshly, "by good people pinning a bad name on them when they're about your age and never letting them forget it. But, you may thank your God I'm not very good. Here, take this money and beat it, and for the Lord's sake go straight if you can."

Incredulous, utterly bewildered, he stared from the roll of bills she had thrust into his hand to the mocking violet eyes with which she was regarding him.

"You mean—you aren't going—to arrest me?"

She nodded.

With a wild, inarticulate cry he darted away, and Norma looked after him with a bitter smile.

"Of course you know he probably wasn't hungry at all and hadn't even a mother, much less a dying one," interrupted a drawling voice.

She wheeled sharply. At her elbow stood a tall, distinguished-looking man with a handsome, sun-browned face and amused gray eyes.

"Oh, yes, no doubt." Her lips curled. "I've been taken in, and a sob story has cost me twenty dollars. Or—I may have salvaged a human life. Does it matter greatly one way or the other?"

"I think it does," he answered gravely. "And may I say it was rather wonderful of you."

Her mouth hardened.

"My dear man, I hate to disillusion you, but I'm by no means the noble creature you imagine. It's very important to me to make this train—I couldn't miss it for the sake of hauling that boy to a policeman." She laughed. "So much for the noble motives you may have ascribed to me!"

And she walked toward the gates, Alaric Temple staring after her, a puzzled frown between his brows.

NORMA saw him again when they were both leaving the train at her station. His luggage was plastered with foreign labels—of course he must be Hugh Temple's brother, about whose visit the Country Club set had been in a furor for weeks. He was something of an international celebrity—a wealthy and successful portrait painter. He also wrote essays, she had heard.

She glanced at him again. His shoulders were broad, his waist lean; he dressed and carried himself exceptionally well.

She realized that he was returning her stare with equal interest, and she deliberately met his eyes with scorn in her own. She did not mean him to carry away the impression that she had freed that unfortunate boy from tender-heartedness. She knew exactly how she looked with that devil-may-care, hard glint in her eyes, that defiant curl on her lips. She had practised that expression faithfully for years.

Beth Temple had met the train—she had known Norma all her life and once had been very fond of her. But now she bowed stiffly, then turned, rushing, as usual, to greet her brother-in-law. Norma knew quite well if Beth had her way Alaric Temple would never meet Norma Norton.

Yet as she moved off to her parked roadster Norma heard him ask, "Who is that beautiful girl, Beth?"

The girl hurried so as not to hear the reply, but she knew exactly what it would be:

"That's the notorious Norma Norton! She *is* beautiful, isn't she? Too bad she's made such a mess of her life. But what could you expect? Blood *will* tell!"

Oh, yes, Norma knew quite well what Beth would say. The whole town had been saying it for years.

The brisk November wind whipped her clear cheeks to a vivid glow as she drove swiftly through town traffic. Once freed of the tangle, she pulled off her hat. She liked to drive bare-

headed. Her thick dark hair blew into a thousand tiny curls about her white brow. She *was* beautiful. The Nortons had always had good looks, even if they were a bad lot. Norma, tall, slender, lithe, and as graceful as a mountain lion, had fully inherited what some one years ago called "that damnable Norton beauty."

No amount of hard riding and playing in the sun had been able to spoil the exquisite texture of her skin. "Snow and roses," "alabaster with fire underneath"—man had been exasperated into saying things like that about her complexion. And if she had made a mess of her life, it had not marred the exquisite symmetry of her chiseled profile, the cleft chin, the proud straight nose, the wide spacing of her great violet eyes with their long, curling black lashes. Only the mouth, sulky and bitter, and that defiant glance of hers betrayed the fact that life had mauled her.

Old Claridge, the gardener, was raking leaves at her brother's place. Richard had inherited the town house, Norma the estate in the country. Once they had hardly known which belonged to which; they had shared each other's possessions without a thought of a distinction. But no more. The girl sighed. Her brother's lost affection was the one thing she regretted about the whole miserable mess. She had always been so desperately fond of Rick. Even the defiant attitude with which she met the world was not quite proof against the pain of having him cut her on the street as he had only the day before.

Little Ritchie, her nephew, was watching Claridge pile up the leaves, an adorable six-year-old with his father's tumbled black hair and brilliant blue eyes, only—Norma's hand closed savagely on the wheel—thank God, those baby eyes did not need to wear the tortured look Rick's had worn so long.

"Auntie! Auntie! Wait!"

He had recognized her and was waving frantically. But she pretended not to see, and speeded past. Poor little kiddie, he had always adored her and he was too young to know why she never came to the house nowadays, why she was not welcome there any more. It was not easy to ignore him. She longed desperately to stop, to snatch him to her heart, to smother him with kisses.

"I'll have to quit coming into town," she told herself, her lips very white. "I didn't bargain to cut myself into little pieces all over again every day."

Bingham was waiting to open the gates for her and he rode up the avenue on the running board in order to take the car around to the garage. He was a small, runty man with a wizened face and little flinty eyes.

"How's tricks, Bingham?" she asked kindly and marveled, as she often had before, at how gentle those sharp features could become at times.

"Fine, Miss Norma!" He touched his cap. "Was in to see doctor today, and he says my lungs are as good as new. After another month in the country he says I can go anywheres."

Norma grinned.

"That means I'll be needing a new chauffeur, I suppose."

"Yes, miss, and I know a feller—" He lowered his voice.

She listened thoughtfully.

Looks as though he does deserve a break," she commented when he finished.

"He sure does, and I—I'll stay till he's—till he can come if you'll have him."

"Fix it up between you," she said.

Bingham's small weasel face went radiant.

"Gee, miss, I wish I could tell you—" But his features worked and he could not go on.

"Don't try, I know," she said gently.

THE house Norma entered had been in the family five generations. It was a lovely, spreading structure of white brick with tall columns wreathed with ivy and wide hospitable verandas and great chimneys, a house meant for large entertaining. Norma thought it rather a shame that so few guests ever came there any more. Its spacious rooms always seemed to reproach her because they were being wasted.

Hattie, a trim, pretty maid, was straightening the drawing-room. Hattie never tired of rubbing up the old mahoganies that had belonged to Norma's great-great-aunt, another ill-fated Norton beauty, who had been drowned on her wedding eve by a rejected suitor. The firelight played on the polished floors of the lovely old room and created rainbows in the prisms of the great crystal chandelier.

"Any news, Hattie?" Norma asked pleasantly.

The girl's face glowed.

"Oh, yes, ma'am. I'd a letter to-day. He's doing splendidly. I knew he would if he got half a chance, but nobody else thought so except you." Her voice broke.

"I don't believe Mike will let us down," said Norma and passed on up the great stately staircase with its finely carved spindles which her great-grandfather had brought from France. Ill-fated he had been, too. When intoxicated, he had fallen down those very stairs to his death. Norma sighed. They were a bad lot, these Nortons, a violent, tragic race; no wonder the world was not surprised when she came a cropper.

A thin woman with graying hair and a face that must once have been beautiful, looked up from her sewing by the small open grate.

"You look tired. I'll get you a cup of tea." She rose hastily, but Norma pressed her back into the chair.

"You mustn't always be trying to wait on me, Pat. One would think I was the invalid, not you."

The other's deep, hollowed eyes lighted passionately.

"There isn't anything I wouldn't do for—" she began.

But Norma checked her.

"All I want you to do is to get well—and forget."

Pat Dexter was trembling.

"And I'm going to because you wish it, though why," tremulously, "you should bother about me after all—"

"I told you to forget," said Norma Norton gently. "I have, and you must."

The other woman made a heroic effort to control her emotions.

"I'll try," she said at last, and the girl gripped her hand.

"Mr. Layton called up to know if you were going to the dinner-dance with him at the Country Club?"

Norma's lips curled.

"I am, indeed, and I'm going to wear that new frock, Pat. It's a bold, bad dress—so exactly what I should wear. Every one will get such a kick out of raising their eyebrows behind my back."

Pat Dexter looked troubled.

"It isn't fair," she said distressfully. "Why do you deliberately encourage people to—to—"

"My dear girl, all my life folks

have prophesied I would come to no good end. You wouldn't have me disappoint them?"

"If they only knew!"

"They'd be terribly let down. They'd rather be able to say *I told you so* every time they look at me. Why"—she laughed recklessly—"I don't know what this town would do if they didn't have *Notorious Norma Norton* to gossip about. And at least when they're picking me to pieces they're letting other people alone. No telling how many small reputations I've saved by concentrating all the old hens on the business of giving me a *huge black one*."

"It is wickedly unfair," said the other again.

But Norma only laughed, that scornful, don't-give-a-damn laugh she had been flinging in scandalmongers' faces all her life.

NURSE BIDDY came in to help her young mistress into the new gown. Biddy Nelson was an angular old woman with a castiron face and the most loyal heart in the world. She had nursed Norma and Rick and their father before them.

She was immensely fond of all the ill-fated Nortons and really grieved that it was not her portion to rear Ritchie, the third generation. Rick had never forgiven Biddy for deserting his little son and walking out of the house when he closed its doors to Norma. Even Norma had tried to get the old soul to go back, but Biddy had refused. She insisted it was her duty to stick by "her baby girl," and she was about the only one, thought Norma bitterly.

"You going out with that Layton man?" inquired Biddy.

Norma nodded, and the old woman compressed her lips.

"He's no good," she said sharply.

Norma laughed.

"Well do I know it!"

"It can't do you no good to associate with the likes of him."

The girl shrugged.

"One must associate with some one, and at least my company can't blacken *his* reputation any. We're both black sheep."

Biddy's eyes flashed.

"You can't say that to me!" she flared.

"I was only quoting the town," Norma explained wickedly.

"And you needn't pretend to me you don't care what folks say about you," Biddy went on. "You've always cared. You may fool everybody else by carrying that pretty head high, but you can't fool me. I know you're eating out your heart." Her eyes filled suddenly. "My poor darling as ought to have—"

"Hush, Biddy! You'll have me sniffling and I've got to be very gay tonight so all the world can see what a brazen creature I am. Don't you know, if I didn't hold my head so high I'd have been trampled under foot long ago? But"—her mouth hardened—"they can't steamroller me, Biddy. I've got my back to the wall, but I'm still fighting. They haven't downed me yet!"

"You ought to go away, Miss Norma, and give them a chance to forget," said the old woman painfully.

"We Nortons may be a bad lot, Biddy, but we've never run away from a fight. The place to find a thing is where you lost it. I'll not skulk off. I'm staying right here and facing it out. And if I go down, it'll be with flags flying and the band playing."

"Yes, but it's breaking your heart just the same," muttered the old woman, staring after the slender, de-

fiant figure. Biddy knew those lips often trembled in spite of their bravado.

"NORMA, how ravishing you are to-night! That—that dress—it's cruelty for any one to be as beautiful as you are in that costume!"

Pierce Layton's hands trembled a little as he laid Norma's evening wrap about her. She was radiant in a gown of silver metal cloth and wine-red velvet, so simply, yet so artfully cut that it outlined every curve of her supple body.

"Do I live up to my reputation of being *The Beautiful and Damned?*"

"You are Cleopatra, Salome, Jezebel, every great beauty in one," he said huskily.

"None of those was a very nice lady, but then" — she laughed— "neither am I."

"But every man is mad about you," he whispered. "You know I am. I—I—"

"But I don't care to hear about it, as I've told you before," she said sharply. "Shall we go?"

He frowned. He was darkly handsome in spite of his sulky, dissipated look.

"I don't understand you," he cried angrily. "You never will let me make love to you. Sometimes I believe you even dislike me. Yet you do let me hang around."

She shrugged her shoulders.

"Any time the arrangement doesn't please you, you can stay away. It doesn't matter to me whether you go or stay."

It was not the first time she had let him feel her disdain.

"I'd never have believed I'd tolerate such treatment from any woman," he said through his teeth.

"It's always been you who were cruel before, hasn't it?" she answered.

He colored. He had had quite a reputation as a heartbreaker till he met Norma Norton.

"If so, you've made me pay for it," he cried, and again she laughed.

The Country Club was already crowded when they arrived, but Layton had reserved a table in advance. Norma heard the usual buzz as she followed the waiter across the café. A few people who met her eyes bowed stiffly. After all, she was Norma Norton, with shares in every bank in town; few people dared snub her entirely.

They gossiped about her; they no longer included her in their intimate gatherings, but she was usually invited even now to larger and more formal parties, and she always went. She got a sardonic pleasure out of appearing because she knew most of the hostesses hoped she wouldn't.

A girl at a table near the door looked up, but when she recognized Norma's companion she glanced hastily away, the painful color flooding her averted face. Poor Paula Neal, she had been on the point of making a great fool of herself over Pierce Layton when Norma took him away from her. Now she hated Norma. No one knew that Paula had her to thank for not having wrecked her life and broken her heart. Even Layton did not suspect that. Norma tolerated him only because she wanted to save Paula from him.

"The Temples have quite a large dinner party, in honor of this brother who's come home from furrin' parts, all covered with glory," murmured Layton.

Norma followed his glance. Beth Temple was presiding at a long lace-spread table with a centerpiece of roses, at which she had evidently made an

effort to assemble the town's brightest social lights. There was an eminent banker or two, a college professor, a clever poetess, besides a bevy of the season's prettiest débutantes, all of them in a flutter. Alaric Temple seemed to be paying them little attention. Norma realized suddenly that he was staring at her just as he had that afternoon with that questioning, puzzled look in his eyes, a strangely disturbing look that brought the blood to her face.

"He's rather good-looking," she said.

"Oh, fearfully, so all the ladies say," Layton sneered. "If you like 'em rather bored and blasé. Do you?" he demanded suddenly, as if he sensed something unusual in her expression.

She made a grimace.

"I'm not bowled over by him at sight, if that's what you mean," she answered irritably, and he looked relieved.

NEVERTHELESS although she did not look that way again, she was peculiarly conscious of Alaric Temple's presence in the room and curiously relieved when he had gone. She disliked the feeling. It wasn't like her to let anybody upset her.

She had half a notion to cut the dance, though it wasn't like her, either, to run away from any situation, no matter how uncomfortable. She shrank from contact with Alaric Temple. She was afraid of that question in his eyes.

Yet she reminded herself bitterly it was unlikely he would come near her. Beth would not include Norma in her group if she could help it. And Alaric was in great demand socially. He would scarcely be able to escape his sister-in-law and the eager debs even if he chose, and Norma really had no assurance that he chose. Yet meet her he did through the agency of his brother Hugh, at whom Beth looked daggers as a consequence.

"May I have this dance, Miss Norton?"

Her gesture of assent was listless, but really her heart throbbed wildly as she slipped into his arms. This man's touch thrilled her as no other man's had ever done. Never in her life had she been afraid before, but she was afraid now.

She knew in a strange fatalistic way that she was going to love Alaric Temple as the Nortons had always loved, madly, devastatingly, absorbingly. And she had long known that, bitter as her cup had been, she would not have drained it to its dregs till she had loved some man and lost him, as she would have to lose him. There was no hope of anything else; she had lost him before she ever saw him.

"I was determined to *know* you," said Alaric Temple abruptly.

She laughed.

"Really? I'm sorry you bothered. I'm quite sure they warned you that I'm not worth knowing. And"—her voice was flat—"unfortunately they were right."

"I wonder," he said quietly, "if any of them *really* know you."

Her heart gave a sudden bound. And then she reminded herself sternly that even this man must not guess the truth about her. She had decided that long ago. No one must know.

"How can they help it?" she said lightly. "I assure you, my doings have been well advertised. The whole world knows *The Notorious Norma.*"

"Don't call yourself that," he told her sharply.

"I'm sorry it distresses you," she

"Tell me about yourself," he demanded. Just what she had dreaded!

said, "but it's my title—well earned. A poor thing, sir, but mine own."

"I want to talk to you," he said.

They were near one of the wide French windows which opened on the lawn. He caught up a cloak from the back of a chair, put it around her, and drew her imperiously out on the brick terrace into the chill white moonlight.

"This isn't very wise, you know," she said. "Beth will be furious."

"Confound Beth! Tell me about yourself," he demanded.

A wild, almost overpowering impulse swept through her. It would be heaven to tell him—everything. But that was impossible.

"What is there to tell which you have not already heard?" she countered to gain time, to recapture the hard, defiant pose which had served so often to conceal a heart goaded almost to the breaking point.

"I do not listen to gossip," he said harshly. "I form my own opinions. I prefer to hear what there is to hear from your own lips.

AND so she would have to condemn *herself* in his eyes. Her heart thudded painfully. Her own lips would doom her.

"What is it you aspire to know?"

She could see he hated her flippancy. She hated it too. She had never felt less flippant in her life.

"I want to know why you act like this?" he said almost angrily. "What has life done to you?"

She laughed.

"No one has done anything to me except myself. All the responsibility is mine. And you must admit I've been thorough."

"Don't jest. What is it all about? Why do they call you that?"

"*Notorious Norma?*" She laughed again. "I told you I earned the title. You see"—her voice was very brittle, very clear, very amused—"I shot a man, a bad man, in a cheap dive he owned over a girl who was dancing there. I bought my way out of jail, but"—her lip curled—"I couldn't buy my name out of the yellow newspapers and tea-table gossip. That, since you must know, is how I became *notorious.*"

"You were in love with him?" he asked painfully.

She shrugged her shoulders.

"He was going to marry the other woman—but—I killed him first."

He was staring at her.

"And is that all?"

She smiled wryly.

"Isn't that enough? He was disreputable; so was the place where I met him. No real lady would ever have been in such a dive with such a man! And I'd been skating on the edge before then. I'd pulled off a number of madcap adventures before this happened, silly foolish things that made people talk. We are rather a wild family, we Nortons. Perhaps you've heard that none of us come to any good end except my brother Rick, who was drinking himself to death as fast as he could till"—her voice softened—"he fell in love with the girl he married. Felicia saved him. But—no one could save me."

"She's dead, isn't she?"

She nodded.

"She was very ill when I had my trouble, and she died a few days later. She—she was an angel. Even her memory is enough to make Rick go straight. It's wonderful, the way they loved each other. He was terribly cynical and disillusioned when he met her. We'd had it dinned into our ears all our lives that we were doomed. Then our mother let us down rather terribly when Rick was only sixteen. The scandal wrecked him. He never believed in anything or anybody again till he met Felicia. Thank God, she never failed him. If she had"—she shivered—"it would have been the end of him."

He was watching her keenly.

"They told me you were thoroughly hardboiled, that you didn't give a rap for anything."

She caught her breath. She had betrayed more than she meant. She realized this man had an instinct about her against which she would have to be on her guard.

"I don't," she said. "I assure you, they're exactly right. I'm a thoroughly brazen creature who enjoys giving the yellow papers a treat."

"I don't believe you!"

"It's quite true."

"I want to paint you," he said abruptly.

Her lip curled.

"I thought you were on a well-earned vacation."

"May I?" He paid no heed to her interruption.

She shook her head.

"It's scarcely possible. Beth and I

are not on intimate terms. She has a feeling my bold badness might be contagious."

"Bother Beth!" he cried angrily. "You could sit for me at your own house. I'd rather paint you there, anyway, in your own environment."

She was sorely tempted. This man allured her powerfully, and she had a great desire to see more of him, to talk to him. Her life, for all her pretense, was very lonely, desperately lonely. But she dared not let Alaric Temple know her too well. He was too keen, too subtle, and already he had too strong a hold on her emotions.

She spoke harshly because she was determined to nip this affair in the bud before she became too cruelly hurt: "I'm not interested. I never permit myself to be bored."

He went quite white. "You are so sure I'd bore you?"

She gave a languid nod.

"You're so intense," she explained insolently. "I hate people who are so deadly serious. I'm decidedly frothy myself." She pretended to yawn. "Shall we go back?"

He gave her a baffled glance.

"They told me you were shallow and crude and—and heartless, and *almost thou persuadest me* they were right. I thought I saw something in your eyes—something very different." He swept her a mocking bow. "Evidently I was mistaken."

She laughed.

"I told you this afternoon I was not at all a noble person. If you imagined I was maligned and misunderstood by my fellow-townsmen, you were too romantic. I assure you"—her eyes glinted—"I am rather proud of *Notorious Norma.*"

He followed her into the ballroom without another word.

Pierce Layton was in a jealous temper. Norma was glad Paula Neal was going abroad in a few days. Once Paula was safely on her way Norma meant to make short shrift of Layton. He got on her nerves terribly; there was nothing about him which she admired.

"What does that guy mean monopolizing you all this time?" he demanded furiously. "I suppose he's crazy about you, too, like every other man you condescend to speak to."

"On the contrary," said Norma bitterly, "I am quite sure he hopes he'll never set eyes on me again."

She had maneuvered to that end, deliberately repulsed Alaric Temple's overtures with insolence, voluntarily earned his disgust. But the success of her plan brought her only an intolerable heartache, and that night Nurse Biddy heard her sobbing as she had not sobbed since those first terrible months when all her world had crashed down about the girl's head.

NORMA had long ago discovered that nothing helped so much when her heart was troubled as an early morning canter. She had several fine-blooded animals in her stables, her favorite a spirited black horse named Sulibar. He had been badly broken and had a reputation for viciousness when she acquired him.

But gradually Norma discovered he was not naturally mean. He had had an abusive keeper when he was a colt and had learned to strike out at everything and everybody to protect himself. Little by little Norma won his confidence, and taught him he need not be on the defensive with her. She understood what made him defiant. She was that way herself.

The October morning was like wine,

and it helped her recover her shaken poise. She rode hard, as she did everything else. Her cheeks were vivid, her hair tangled all over her bare head in tiny curls, when she leaped off her horse and strode toward the house, slapping her polished black boots with her leather crop. Her white silk blouse was open at her throat beneath the scarlet coat which sat so jauntily over her smart white riding breeches.

But on the threshold of the drawing-room she paused and her heart began to thud painfully. A man was standing before the buhl cabinet which contained a well-thumbed collection of her favorite prose and poetry. The pulse in her slim white throat pounded. It was Alaric Temple, and in his slender, artist's hand he held her copy of "Tristan and Isolde," which she had lined and underlined because she loved the glamorous passages.

"How do you do?" he said very casually as if there was nothing surprising in his having intruded. "Some one in this house has a very pretty taste in literature, I see."

She felt him studying her, and her face hardened to the defiant mask she usually wore nowadays.

"My—my father's collection," she said brusquely. "Silly old stuff!"

He closed the cabinet with a bang.

"Have you breakfasted?" she asked pointedly.

He flushed. "Yes; have you?"

She nodded.

"Long ago, but I could do with another cup of coffee. Will you join me or"—insolently—"must you go?"

He did not lose his temper, as she had expected.

"Please, I know I've been presumptuous," he said humbly, "but I—you interest me."

She turned away and rang for Hattie, who brought in the coffee service and placed it on a small table near the fire. Norma silently filled two of the delicate china cups.

"That maid of yours seems a nice young person," he observed as he accepted the sugar. "I talked to her a little while I was waiting for you."

Norma stared, and her eyes narrowed. She had warned the girl, but Hattie was likely to be a little indiscreet on certain subjects.

"She's a splendid servant if one overlooks the fact that she has a lively imagination. She's given to romancing if you let her, which"—her mouth set—"I don't. Servants always have sob stories, but I never listen."

"Don't you?" he asked significantly, and she dropped her eyes.

Undoubtedly he had wormed something out of Hattie. Why must he pry into her affairs? Why did he want to delve into her heart and expose its wounds?

"Are you a detective as well as an artist and an essayist?" she demanded contemptuously.

His gray eyes met hers quietly. "You're afraid of me, aren't you?"

She was furious.

"I've never been afraid of anything in my life!" she cried.

"Oh, yes, you have. You're afraid to let me know you very well. That's why you won't let me paint you."

She surveyed him with hard, defiant eyes.

"You're very clever, aren't you? You know I never took a dare in my life."

"Then I may paint your portrait?" he cried eagerly.

"How long will it take?"

"Four or five mornings—no longer."

She hesitated. After all, four or five mornings were such a brief inter-

val in a lifetime. It would be rather wonderful to have him there. Surely she could maintain her pose that long, defy those keen gray eyes to find a flaw in her armor for those few fleeting hours.

"How will you paint me?" she cried mockingly. "As *The Maiden at the Well* or *The Dying Gladiatrix?*"

He ignored her flippancy.

"I want to paint you as *you,* in the gown you wore last night."

She swept him a mocking curtsy.

"I'm yours to command, kind sir."

He picked up his hat and cane.

"Did you walk?" He nodded. "Wait, I'll have my chauffeur bring the car around. He can take you home."

"I don't like to put you to any bother. I'm getting myself a roadster to-day."

"It's no bother," she said carelessly. "Bingham has very little to do. I do most of my own driving."

As they waited in the spacious vestibule a woman came down the stairs and passed toward the back of the house without a glance in their direction.

"What an interesting face!" commented Alaric Temple. "How that woman has suffered!"

"Pat *has* suffered," acknowledged Norma with a shadow in her beautiful eyes.

"Pat?"

"Pat Dexter."

He started.

"Why, that—that's the name of—of—"

"Yes," she acknowledged. "It was Pat who was going to marry Dan Lowry—if I hadn't killed him!"

"And she's living here with you?"

She nodded curtly. "That's another thing my neighbors have against me. I'm always picking up with the wrong sort of folks. I had an actress here once who'd got herself smeared all over the newspapers, and later I entertained a divorcee who was even more notorious than I. I have a weakness, it seems, for people *good* folks abhor."

"So-called *good* folks," he commented, "have hounded many a poor devil to death. I have a feeling there's more real charity in giving a leg up to somebody who's slipped a little than in all the millions which are spent by famous philanthropists."

Her cynical expression did not change. "I don't do this for charity," she explained, "but because I love to shock the natives. Besides, I get a kick out of publicity—I made the front page headlines once myself, if you remember."

He made a gesture of distaste.

"Don't! I can't bear to hear you talk like that. I won't believe you're as cheap and tawdry as you make out."

"Why should I bother to deceive you?" she inquired. "You're nothing to me. I told you I hate serious, intense people."

He winced.

"You want me to hate you," he cried angrily, "and I think I'm going to. Good morning!"

NORMA'S hand crept to her heart as she stared after him. She *was* doing her best to make him hate and despise her. She had made up her mind long ago that love was not for her, yet she knew had things been different she could have loved Alaric Temple gloriously.

But what could not be, could not be. It was better for him to hate her; he would suffer less.

Yet there was a mist of tears before

her eyes as she watched him drive away. How erect he was, how fit! And he had mental and spiritual attraction for her as well.

But he was not for her even if every beat of her heart told her he was her mate, without whom she could never be complete. She must go on alone, dragging out an existence that would grow more desolate with every passing year. Yet she had to lose him; that had been ordained long ago. It was too late now to draw back or even weep over what was done.

The telephone interrupted her painful thoughts. She recognized the voice of Judge Henry Hale, who had been Felicia's guardian and had loved her like his own daughter. He loved Norma Norton, too, a fact his acquaintances could not understand.

"Norma, my dear?"

"Yes, Uncle Henry!" They were not related, but she had always called him that, and he liked it.

"I hate to impose on you. You said you'd holler if I went too strong. But will you?"

"What is it, Uncle Henry? Have you another boy for me?"

He chuckled.

"That's the ticket. But you're carrying so much more of the load now than you should, I don't want to push you. So if you can't take care of this youngster conveniently, say so."

"But I can. Matt spoke to me yesterday. He's clearing some new land over on the other side of the place. He needs an extra hand."

"How's Matt doing?"

"The best overseer I've ever had"—she laughed—"which all goes to show you never can tell."

"There isn't one person in a thousand would have taken a chance on him."

"Well, I did, and I'm not sorry. I'll be down this afternoon to sign the papers. What's the lad's name?"

"Paul Moore, and—and God bless you, my dear. I'm sure He will some day."

Norma's eyes were wistful. Lately, God seemed to have mislaid her. The devil had been far more active with his attentions.

It was rather late when she drove up to the stately stone building which was the county courthouse, but Judge Hale, a silver-haired old man with shrewd blue eyes, was waiting. It required only a few minutes to transact the business, but she lingered for a little chat, and it was quite dark when she came out to her car. For a moment she did not recognize the tall man leaning with his back against the door, surveying the marble structure before him over a lighted cigarette.

"Oh, it's you!" Her heart quickened and she deliberately fought for the flippant voice she had found so useful in disguising her true emotions. "And what are you doing? Studying our native architecture?"

"No," he said suavely, "only reflecting on the crimes that are often committed in the name of Justice.

"That's right, you *are* interested in sociology and prison reform and that sort of thing, aren't you? You've written essays on the subject, I believe."

"I'll send them to you if you're interested."

She laughed.

"Really, I'm sorry, but I'm not. I'd never wade through them—I've such a shallow mind. I just can't dive deep without coming up for air."

"I see." He regarded her thoughtfully. "It's rather a fascinating subject, prison reforms, the *parole*

system"—she started—"especially to any one who has a sympathy for *the under dog.*"

How uncanny was his instinct! She had a feeling that he, too, had recognized in her something his heart craved and that he was desperately groping through the smoke screen she had deliberately laid between them.

"Unfortunately," she said lightly, "the only kind of dog I'm interested in is a good bird dog or maybe a fox hound." And she drove away.

BUT she bought his last volume of essays before she went home and she read every word of them that very night because they fascinated her. His philosophy was so essentially her own. He was interested in every human's duty to his fellowman. He regretted the spoiled lives he saw all around him, doubting the necessity for such human wreckage.

He did not preach; he merely recommended more common sense in dealing with society's unfortunates, a practical, everyday philosophy that allowed every man his self-respect and a chance to come back if he had fallen. He advocated giving the *under dog* another chance.

Not even to herself did Norma admit how eagerly she awaited the morrow nor how the thought of sitting to Alaric Temple thrilled her. Her heart was racing when she came down the stairs the following morning in the scarlet and silver gown, her dark curls held back by a long slender diamond pin, a fan of ostrich plumes in her hand, her feet in slim silver slippers.

She paused on the bottom step.

She saw his eyes light up at sight of her, so tall and slim and graceful. She was beautiful with her red and white coloring, her proud dark head, her straight, delicately penciled eyebrows, black like the curling lashes that swept her vivid cheek, an exquisite creature, all fire and snow, with violet eyes as deep and as inscrutable as the sea, and a sulky, scornful mouth like a passion flower, disdainful, alluring, dangerous.

"I—will you stand over there?" he said rather huskily.

He had elected to paint her against the background of a tall Chinese screen, a study in black with trailing across it, the only relief to its somberness, a brilliant dragon all in brazen tones with jeweled eyes and sinister fangs.

She took up her pose.

"So I'm to be the Serpent Woman, am I?" she asked derisively.

He had brought a folding easel and several canvases. When she spoke, he was getting into a worn blue linen smock. He picked up his palette and began to squeeze out the tubes of color.

"You are to be you, I hope," he said quietly. "Any halfway artist can paint a passable likeness. It is not so easy to capture a *soul* on canvas."

"And is that what you're trying to do?" she laughed. "I'm not so sure I have a soul. Is it so very essential?"

He was sketching in rapid lines and paid no attention.

Yet he talked as he worked more than she had expected. She had an idea he was trying to draw her out, but two could play at that game. Because she was really eager to know more about his theories, she provoked him into propounding some of them and then she deliberately tore them all to pieces, laughed at the idea she owed her fellow-man anything, scoffed at his pleas for the under dog.

And so the morning ended and he went away, exasperated, white to the lips with anger, and she had the sorry

satisfaction of knowing that so far she had eluded his every effort to pierce the glittering armor with which she guarded herself. And she was thoroughly heartsick and wretched all the rest of the day. She kept seeing that contemptuous curl of his lip. The portrait she did not look at. He had not asked her to view it, and he had left it covered with a cloth. She was not curious. She was quite sure that so far at least he had not been able to capture her soul, only the scornful face that belonged to Notorious Norma.

She had another worry now.

Pierce Layton was getting restive, and she had to have an engagement with him again that night. She was not ready to break with him entirely till she was sure Paula Nash was safely out of his way. They went to the theater and later dropped in at the Country Club for supper. Norma was not in a dancing humor, but Layton insisted, and she was too listless to argue.

Almost the first person she saw in the ballroom was Alaric Temple. He was dancing with Beth, who shot Norma a venomous glance. Beth was crazy about Paula Nash, and naturally hated Norma for her friend's sake.

Norma tossed her head and brazened it out. She despised Layton, yet because Beth and Alaric were looking on she played up to him. She felt no compunction for the fact that he was losing his head over her. He had made many women suffer, and she rather enjoyed evening up old scores. Perhaps he would be more thoughtful when he learned what it meant to be trifled with.

"Norma, you're destroyingly beautiful to-night!" he almost groaned.

She smiled at herself in the tall pier mirror across the floor. It gave her back a lissome, seductive person in a Parisian gown of black tulle, very long, with narrow jet bands outlining the deep pointed neck and narrow shoulder straps, the famous black opals burning sultrily against her white throat, her black hair drawn back and held by a single white gardenia.

"Does the peacock strut its stuff?" she replied maliciously.

She meant Alaric to see for himself that she was quite shameless, and vain and tawdry, all the things she was accused of. Yet he came over and asked her to dance.

"Sorry," she said carelessly, "but I'm dancing only with Pierce."

He went white.

"That man isn't fit for you to associate with," he said thickly.

She lifted her brows. "Oh, but he's very amusing."

"You aren't in love with him! You took him away from another girl just for the fun of it!"

"Dear me, I suppose I've neither a heart nor a soul. How very deplorable! But then people do travel so much more lightly nowadays."

"I wonder why I can't keep away from you," he cried through his teeth. "You only mock me."

"Do I?" She laughed in his face. "Thank heaven, this poor girl doesn't have to look on while you torture her. She's gone."

"Paula's gone? Are you sure? When?"

"She left this afternoon. Beth and I took her to the train." He frowned. "Does it disappoint you that she won't be here any more for you to torment?" he asked.

"Yes, it does, rather," she acknowledged coolly. "She always played up to me so well. I got quite a kick out of watching her writhe."

"Oh, you're impossible!" He wheeled sharply and walked away.

"WHAT does that guy have to say to you so much?" growled Pierce Layton.

She was conscious of a great relief. At least she needn't be bothered with him any more.

"You'd be surprised," she murmured insolently.

"See here,"—he caught her arm—"I want to talk to you."

She saw he had been drinking and was in an ugly humor. There had to be a show-down sooner or later, and she was never one to postpone an agony.

"Very well," she said coolly and drew her silver and black brocaded evening wrap about her.

They stepped out on the terrace.

"You've played me along for weeks now," he began, "and I don't know any more where I stand than I did the first time I saw you. You've never let me touch you and you've taunted me till I'm half out of my mind. It's got to stop! Either you're in love with me or you've made all kinds of a fool of me. Which is it?"

"My dear boy, I am not the least in love with you," she drawled, "and you *are* a great fool not to have known it long ago."

His face contorted with fury.

"You—you—" He choked.

"I've simply given you a dose of your own medicine," she went on icily. "You were ruining Paula Nash's life. I kept you away from her. That was all the interest I ever had in you. She's gone now, safe from you, and, thank God, I don't have to worry with you any longer. Never come near me again, *never!*"

"So you strung me along to save poor little Paula, did you?" he sneered. "Well, you can't get by with treating me like that! I'll pay you for all you've done to me! I'll take my pay from those insulting lips of yours!"

He sprang. She was startled, taken unawares. He had her in his arms, her hands pinioned at her sides. She struggled furiously, but he was stronger, and she was helpless. He bent her back; his mouth approached hers. Her eyes went perfectly black.

"If you kiss me, I'll *kill* you!" she cried.

"As you did Dan Lawry, eh? Well, it will be worth it, to master you just once, my fine, high-headed lady!"

He stooped and she was swept by a terrible nausea. She was an intensely fastidious person; her lips she had given no man. The thought of this cad claiming them against her will was horrible. Her eyes blazed in her white face and yet those repulsive lips came nearer and nearer.

And then a lean, sinewy hand closed on Pierce Layton's collar, and he was spun about like a top. A powerful fist connected with his handsome jaw and he toppled backward, struggling madly to regain his balance.

"Get out!"

It was Alaric Temple.

Layton had come up against one of the stone columns and stood there panting, his muscles flexed. But the other man's contemptuous eyes and unwavering attitude wilted what show of fight he had contemplated. With an ironical smile he began to straighten his disarranged coat.

"Oh, certainly, far be it from me to persist when a lady has such a gallant defender!"

He turned and strode away, straight down the clubhouse steps to where he had parked his car.

Could she keep him from guessing? She stiffened herself and assumed a defiant expression

Norma was trembling uncontrollably.

"I'd have died had he—" She broke off and covered her face with her shaking hands.

"So you were really protecting Paula and you lied when you said you had enjoyed watching her writhe?" he asked, almost tremulously.

Her composure was terribly shaken.

"Please— I—"

"Norma, why do you lie? Why are you *living* a lie? You aren't any of the things you try to make the world believe you!"

She was at the end of her strength. Before that note in his voice, so yearning, so passionately tender, all her defenses were crumbling cruelly.

"Let me alone—please—"

"Don't send me away," he begged. "Let me take you home."

"No, no!"

He tried to search her eyes, but she would not look at him.

"Of course I'll go if you really wish it," he said very gently.

"I do."

He left her without another word, and had she not loved him before, she would have loved him then. He had had the advantage but he had not

pressed it. She had been hounded so long, she could appreciate generosity.

BY the next morning she had had time to recover herself. She was even more defiant than before, nor did her vivid face betray the anguish that had racked her in the night. She mocked him, made sport of all his ideals, deliberately tried to provoke him, but he was curiously gentle with her.

When he left she was uneasy. She had an overpowering desire to look at the portrait on which he had worked with such deft, confident strokes as if it were progressing exactly to his satisfaction. But she didn't. She was afraid, afraid that he had somehow in spite of her captured something of what she was so determined he should not see. And the next day she was even more anxious. There was an expression in his eyes that thrilled her and still it frightened her. He had no right to look at Notorious Norma like that, as if she were some one very precious, some one rather wonderful.

"When *will* you be finished?" she demanded pettishly on the fifth morning. "I didn't know this was going to prove such a long, tiresome business."

He was putting away his materials for the day.

"So you *have* been bored?"

She pretended to smother a yawn.

"And how!"

But he did not look provoked.

"The portrait really *is* finished," he said, "all but a few finishing touches that do not matter greatly. I'll do them to-morrow and then I need not come again if you wish."

Her heart seemed to fall away from her. Not to see him again! Not to look forward all day from the moment he left till he was due again. She was appalled at her own recoil from the idea. She had not dreamed how precious it had become to her, having him there, working away in his stained blue smock, his keen wit clashing with hers. Queer how in such a brief time he had managed to entrench himself in her thoughts, how even when he was absent, she seemed to see his fine, chiseled face and hear his modulated, even voice.

"Why should it be necessary?" she cried angrily. "You've got what you wanted, haven't you? My portrait!"

"Have I got what I want?" he asked softly.

She caught her breath.

"Let's hope so," she taunted. "I'm too sick of posing to do it all over again if you've failed."

"You may judge whether I've failed or not," he said as he dropped the cover over the easel, "when I show you *yourself* to-morrow."

Her heart beat stiflingly.

"I see myself a dozen times a day in my mirror. That's no novelty."

But he only smiled and went away, and all day she was restless and uneasy. Many times she went toward the easel, determined to see for herself how much of her he had got on canvas. But every time her hand faltered. She was afraid to look.

She was re-reading his book for the third time that afternoon when Hattie came upstairs to her sitting room.

"There's a lady to see you, Miss Norma. She didn't give her name."

It was a dreary afternoon, the first day of November, with a cold drizzle of rain that wrapped itself about the house in a gloomy fog and threatened twilight already although it was only four. There was no light in the drawing room save the fitful blue and rose glow of the fire. For a minute Norma

did not recognize the slight, smartly dressed figure across the room. And then her heart gave a painful throb.

"Beth!"

It was indeed Beth Temple. Once she had been in and out of Norma's house a dozen times a week, but it had been long now since she had crossed that threshold.

"Yes, it's I, Norma." She looked embarrassed and curiously shamefaced.

"Why, I—this *is* an unexpected pleasure." Norma tried to be flippant but her voice trembled; she had once been terribly fond of Beth. "I'll ring for some tea."

Alaric's sister-in-law was nervous and ill at ease. Norma tried to make her more comfortable with chitter-chatter, but clearly Beth's mind was not on idle gossip.

"I—this seems like old times," she stammered, with a glance around the lovely, fire-lit old room. "We used to have so much fun here. The—our old crowd—nothing's ever been so jolly without you, Norma."

Norma winced. If they had missed her, how much more cruelly had she missed them—old friends of whom she had once thought the world and from whose good times she had been so relentlessly excluded of late. She liked people; she had loved her old gang.

"It was jolly, wasn't it?" she said in a low voice.

Beth swallowed painfully.

"Norma, we—I—we want you back."

The tea cup crashed in Norma's saucer.

"*You*—I don't understand!" she cried.

Beth's lips quivered.

"I guess we were the ones who didn't understand. We — I — oh, Norma, why didn't you tell us what you've been doing? Why did you let us think you were going straight to the devil when actually you've been earning yourself a shining crown?"

"What do you mean?" cried Norma in a strangled voice.

"We know all about it now. Alaric found out. God forgive us. He had more faith in you than we who have known you always and should never have doubted you."

"What—what has Alaric found out?"

"That you've been giving work to people for years who needed help, that you've saved dozens who have been on the rocks till you came along, that Bingham, your chauffeur, was an ex-convict, unable to get work and dying with tuberculosis when you took him in, that Hattie and her husband Mike served terms in the penitentiary and were about to sink back into a life of crime because no one would believe they wanted to be honest and give them employment!

"But you believed in them. You took her here in your house and you gave him a stake, and it's all to your credit that he's doing well out West, where she's going to join him soon. And for years you've been working with Judge Henry Hale. You've had dozens of boys paroled to you from the Reform School where they were learning to be criminals, and you've given them work here on your place and helped make good citizens out of them.

"Matt, your foreman, was going straight to hell when you begged Judge Hale to parole him to you and you've saved him. And those women you had here, that actress and the divorcee, about whom we all got so excited, you took them in because they were poor, hunted creatures with nowhere else to

go, and you gave them shelter till they had strength to go elsewhere and make a new life. Oh, Norma"—she was crying now—"while we turned up our noses at you, you've been turning your house into a place of refuge for poor, crippled, tortured humans who needed help and sympathy!

"We sneered at you and we drew our skirts away when you passed, and—and not one of us is fit to tie your shoe. We spent the time slandering you that you spent doing God's work. We hated you for Paula's sake when we should have been on our knees thanking you for saving her from that cad. Norma, Norma, can you ever forgive us? Can you ever take us back into your heart? We've hurt you so!"

Somehow they were clinging together, their tears mingled, all the defiance washed from Norma's bruised heart by her old friend's tenderness.

"I—I've been as much to blame as any one," she said brokenly. "I—I thought you wanted to despise me, all of you. I didn't dream you'd be interested even if you knew what I was doing. I was proud and sensitive, I—I thought you all really wanted me to come to a bad end so you could say, *I told you so.* I had no more faith in you than you in me, you see. I—I believed you enjoyed being malicious and spiteful. I—it's been as much my fault as any one's."

"But it's all over now." Beth's arms tightened about her. "You won't hold it against us? You—you'll come back, Norma?"

A great light shone in those glorious violet eyes.

"If—you want me."

"To-night—every one's coming to my house—you'll come?"

"Yes, Beth."

The other girl rose to go. On the threshold she paused.

"Alaric said you are to look at the portrait," she whispered.

Norma stood a long time quite motionless before the easel, and her hands trembled as she lifted the drape.

Against a somber background, a woman stood, stamping beneath her feet a cruel writhing serpent, destroying that which was the symbol of evil, venomous, malign. A glorious woman of rare and exquisite beauty, her face typifying all the ideals of the world, a gallant, spiritual face, with eyes fired with sympathy and a mouth of divine tenderness.

The tears began to steal down Norma Norton's cheeks. So Alaric had seen her like that, had groped his way past the hard, defiant shell that was Notorious Norma to the passionate tender heart of the woman whose soul was swept with compassion for the unfortunate, whose strength and sympathy had been bent on stamping out the dragon of intolerance.

"NORMA!" He was there just behind her.

She looked at him through blinding tears.

"My dear, my dear!" he whispered.

Again her emotions had swept away her defenses. She loved him. She had always known he could take her by storm. He held out his arms and she could not resist the wild responding of her heart.

"Norma!" He crushed her to him. "I love you!"

It was heaven to hear. His voice set every pulse in her body racing. She had sensed their love would be no light affair. They were both too highstrung to love easily. This tide which was sweeping them from their moorings

was no casual thing. They could have been so gloriously mated had it been possible. But it was not possible!

She had had the strength to do many difficult things. She was in no sense of the word weak, for Life had disciplined her cruelly. But never had she had to do so bitter a thing as she did now.

"Please, Alaric, you mustn't!"

He was astounded; he could not believe he had heard aright. His outraged eyes questioned her.

"What do you mean? I love you! You are mine! The woman I've been seeking all my life!"

She smiled piteously.

"I can never be yours."

"How dare you? You love me! You can't look me in the eyes and deny it! Why should you try to deny this glorious thing that has happened to us? It's sacrilege to go against it!"

She prayed for strength.

"And yet I can never marry you!"

"*Norma!*"

"I tried to spare you. I wanted to save you all this. That is why I made every effort to repel you. Do you think"—her lips trembled—"it was easy to make myself contemptible in your eyes when every atom of my being craved for your respect? Do you not know how desperately lonely I have been? What it would mean to me to be able to accept your love? Only despair gave me the strength to spurn it just as it forces me to send you away now?" Her voice broke suddenly.

"But, Norma, why? Why must you send me away? What earthly obstacle is there to our marriage? Is it this petty gossip here? You know that means nothing to me. Besides, you have justified yourself so splendidly—the past is dead."

She smiled wanly.

"The past never dies. It lives on and on to damn generations as yet unborn. Sit down, Alaric. My own decision is made. All your protests cannot alter it. But I owe you an explanation because—you love me."

He sank into a chair. She crossed the room to stare out at the cold gray rain and the world it enveloped in a sodden mist. When she turned her face was white and set, her eyes ineffably sad.

"I told you that when Rick was a mere youth our mother failed us horribly. It wrecked his life. It *is* horrible, Alaric, to face a world that knows that sort of thing about one's mother. You'll never know what I went through with him. He was proud and sensitive, it was crucifixion to him to know his mother's name was a byword on men's lips. He died a thousand deaths of shame.

"Alaric, my name, too, has been a byword. When *that* happened—when I saw my face in yellow newspapers, my shame blared to the four corners of the earth, I made a solemn oath, and nothing, not even this great love I have for you, can alter my determination. Marriage is not for me. No, Alaric, the past is not dead. It cannot die. And I will never bring a child into the world to suffer what Rick did, to learn, as my child would be sure to learn some day, that *his* mother had been"—her head drooped—"The Nortorious Norma Morton, who shot a man in a disgraceful brawl."

PASSIONATE protests trembled on his lips, but they died unuttered. There was something so inflexible in her fixed white face, something so inexorable in her tragic eyes, hope faltered in his heart. He

knew nothing he could say could alter her.

"You must go away at once; you must forget me," went on that quiet voice. "You have your life to live, and I have mine. If it will comfort you, you may know that there will never be any other man just as there—there never has been any other in my life but you.

"I've never told a living soul, but you deserve to know: I cannot. I will not have *you* think I loved Dan Lowry. He was nothing to me; I barely knew him. He"—her lips worked—"it's terribly hard to speak of it even yet. But surely I'm not called on to let you go believing I—I—"

She dropped her face in her hands, could not go on speaking. Watching her, the man who loved her marveled at her capacity for suffering, her fortitude under it.

"He was a scoundrel, a gambler and—and worse, a blackmailer always on the lookout for fresh victims to bleed. Pat Dexter, who is here in my house now, was really his wife though he never acknowledged it because she was more useful to him when people did not know.

"Years ago he got her into an exclusive girls' school in the East. Most of the students were daughters of wealthy men. His object was to plant Pat there to secure information for him to use in his blackmailing schemes. She was very clever at that sort of thing. She pretended to be his sister and he came to see her once a week and occasionally she met him in town. She was very pretty and quite popular. No one suspected the truth.

"I was in that school at the time and so was Felicia, who later became Rick's wife. She was an orphan, Judge Hale's ward, and she had a great deal of money which passed directly into her hands when she married. Through Pat she met Lowry, who was exactly the type to fascinate a very inexperienced young girl. With an eye on her fortune he did everything in his power to captivate her. She was infatuated, wrote him many impassioned love letters, the gushing sort of letters romantic school girls write when they're too innocent to know how those letters sound to older and more experienced people.

It was Dan Lowry's scheme to elope with Felicia, go through a ceremony with her, and desert her. But Pat, who always loved him desperately, weakened in the pinch. She told me the whole horrible truth. I wired for Judge Hale. He came, saw Lowry, and put such a fear into him, the scoundrel skipped out overnight with Pat, leaving Felicia horrified at her narrow escape and cured of her fascination.

"It never occurred to her that Lowry might bob up in her life again. She forgot all about him and neither Judge Hale nor I knew anything about the letters. That summer Felicia met Rick. They fell desperately in love, and married soon afterward. To him she was an angel as—as she is to me. He had been drinking himself to death but she saved him. On her hinged his immortal soul. Rick could not have lived and doubted Felicia. He couldn't even to-day if he did not have her memory on which to build his faith. And when their son was three years old, Lowry came here and built a roadhouse.

"I think he must have begun torturing Felicia almost at once, though I did not know it for months. We had never told Rick about her experience with the man and Lowry had her let-

ters. He was threatening to expose her to her husband. Of course she should have been able to go to Rick and tell him the whole story. But"—she hesitated. "You don't know Rick. Our mother had left him so cruelly hurt, it had been almost impossible for him to believe in anyone again. His disillusionment made him terribly suspicious and cynical and intolerant. He—he loved me devotedly but you see how completely he turned against me when I failed him.

"Anyway, Felicia did not dare tell him. She'd have done anything to keep those letters from Rick, and Lowry knew it. He kept promising every time she gave him money to give them to her, but he didn't of course. Her health began to fail. She'd never been very strong and she was frailer after her baby's birth, and that fiend kept hounding her till she was distracted.

"No wonder she had no resistance and went from influenza into pneumonia. Her condition was precarious from the first. It was then she told me about Lowry. She realized she was going to die and she was frantic at the thought of those letters rising up to sully her name after she was gone. She knew once she was out of his reach Lowry would sell the letters to Rick and she knew it would be equivalent to signing Rick's death warrant. I was the only person in whom she dared confide and she begged me to save her and to save Rick and their baby.

"It was that night I went to Lowry's roadhouse." Her voice faltered. "The rest you know. I killed him, but I got the letters. I took them to Felicia, and we destroyed them together. She lived only a week longer and we—we kept my trouble from her. She didn't dream what those letters cost me."

"And you didn't tell? You never have told why you were there?"

"You know I couldn't tell. I couldn't have dragged Felicia's name into that sordid case, have had her slandered and gossiped about. People would never have believed she was innocent but I *know* she was. I couldn't break Rick's heart all over again and send him back to hell and condemn his little son to the shame and torment that had so nearly wrecked his father. I faced it all out and determined to pay the price for Rick's soul and for this baby's and"—her hands knotted—"I've got to go on paying.

"*You* are part of that price, the cruelest of all, you and the little son we might have had. I hoped I would never fall in love, I hoped I would not have to drain my cup to its bitterest dregs, but I could not escape my fate. I love you, I shall never love any one else, but I will never marry you because my name is tarnished, my honor a thing men sneer at."

"Doesn't it matter that *I* think you the noblest, most gallant girl I ever knew?" he asked humbly.

She shook her head.

"Nothing matters but my solemn oath never to pass on to any one else the shame I took voluntarily on my own shoulders."

"But I—you and I have a right to our happiness as much as Rick and his son. It—even yet it is not too late to speak the truth, to clear your name."

"But we can't take our happiness at the expense of a dead woman and a man and child who adore her memory. No, Alaric, I'll never speak and—and after to-night I'll never see you again." She was trembling. "Take me in your arms. Hold me to you just once again. Kiss me. I want it to remember. This is good-by."

With a sob he clasped her to him. They clung together, swept by wild regrets and yearning, each trying to crowd into that moment all the tendernesses that might have filled the years ahead.

"My darling, my darling!" he murmured over and over again, kissing her lips, her eyes, her throat.

"Alaric, beloved!"

And then she made him free her. For a moment they stood, side by side, trembling, shaken to their depths, and then he had carried her hand to his lips, and was gone, and Norma pressed her cold fingers over her aching eyes in order not to see him go and bit her white lips to keep from calling him wildly to come back.

Slowly she climbed the stairs and lay face downward on her bed, not weeping now, too desperate even for tears, alone, so terribly alone, and the burden of the cross she had long borne so faithfully was almost more than she could endure. Its dreadful weight pinioned her beneath it while she prayed for the strength to rise and falter on.

It was thus Pat Dexter found her.

"You're in love with that artist," said the woman hoarsely, "and you've sent him away."

Norma made no reply but her white lips quivered.

"It isn't fair! It's all wrong!" went on the other. "If any one ever deserved happiness, it's you!"

"Hush!" said Norma wearily, but Pat Dexter refused to be stilled.

"Why should you sacrifice your life for others? You're worth more than the rest of the pack put together. What have I to live for? Nothing, and you know it!"

"I made my bed, I've got to lie on it."

"You mean, others made it for you," cried the woman. "It's time some one squared the account."

"Pat"—Norma's eyes filled with wild alarm—"you wouldn't! No, no, you can't—you mustn't let me down! We made our bargain. I kept my share to the last notch, and you've got to do the same. Promise me, you'll never—"

"You know I owe you too much ever to fail you," muttered the other sulkily. "But it's wrong, cruelly, awfully wrong."

NEVER had Norma less heart for anything than she had for Beth's party that evening. She was horribly depressed and the thought of seeing Alaric again was like a knife in her heart. How could they meet casually, he and she, who meant so much to each other? How could they laugh and talk with people when each knew the pain that was stabbing the other's heart?

But she couldn't disappoint Beth after her generous action that afternoon. It had not been easy to come to Norma and beg forgiveness. So she got wearily into an evening gown, nothing bizarre or striking this night, a simply draped velvet of a deep shade of blue that was gorgeous with her violet eyes and dark hair.

Little pains as she took with her attire, she had never looked more beautiful than when she entered Beth's drawing-room. Suffering had dimmed her high color and painted shadows under her eyes, but it had also lent a new sweetness to her lovely mouth and there was something about her wistful smile as she surveyed them all, these once dear friends, from whom she had been so long estranged, that brought a lump to every throat.

No one discussed the reconciliation,

but each managed in some way to convey regret for the past and joy at the reunion. There were hands that pressed hers tenderly when no one was looking, eyes that met hers with shy warmth, lips that had once curled at the very mention of her name smiling at her now.

Norma could not have been human and not felt comforted by these expressions of affection. Tears were never far from her eyes that night, and, bruised and aching as was her heart, it was precious to know she was no longer an outlaw. For that she had Alaric to thank. But she dared not meet his eyes.

Beth had announced that he was leaving on the morrow, called away by unexpected business. Norma's slender white hands locked, but she did not glance up. So he was keeping faith with her, as she had known he would. He was leaving because she asked it, and after to-night she would never see him again, never watch the light in his dear eyes, never hear his deep, low voice again.

There was some sort of commotion in the street outside the drawing-room windows, but Norma, absorbed in her own distressing thoughts, did not notice.

"It's newsboys calling an extra!" exclaimed Hugh Temple. "What can have happened? They never get out an extra!"

He went out and returned with a paper across which spread wide headlines.

"What is it?" Every one crowded about, read over his shoulder.

Norma heard smothered exclamations, a sharp whistle. Suddenly she was aware that they were all staring at her. Her heart began to race and she started to her feet.

"Why do you look at me like that?" she cried. "What's happened?"

It was Alaric who handed her the paper. For a moment the glaring type blurred before her eyes. Then the full significance of that glaring headline smote her.

PAT DEXTER COMMITS SUICIDE AFTER TELLING ALL THE TRUTH ABOUT DAN LOWRY MURDER

"No, no!" cried Norma wildly. "It isn't true! It can't be true!"

She was running frantically toward her car, which was parked outside.

"Home, Bingham, as fast as possible!" she cried to the chauffeur, and was away before any one could overtake her.

"Pat! Pat!" she was sobbing. "You can't have let me down; you can't have failed me after all I've done for you!"

The first frenzy of her alarm was subsiding. She still clutched the paper to her pounding heart. She smoothed out the crumpled pages and forced herself to read.

Pat Dexter, the "other woman" in the Dan Lowry case, astounded police to-night by asking to make a statement of the true facts of the notorious killing.

Miss Dexter admitted that she killed Lowry, to whom she had been secretly married for ten years, because of his brutal treatment. She exonerated Miss Norma Norton of any part in the crime, and explained the latter's presence in the road house on the fatal night.

According to Miss Dexter, or Mrs. Lowry, she at one time attended a girls' school where Miss Norton befriended her.

Distracted by her husband's threats, a stranger here, Pat Dexter remembered her old school friend and telephoned Miss Norton, saying she was in great trouble and asking her to come to the road house to see her. She

meant to ask for money to get out of town.

But Norma Norton arrived just after Pat Dexter, goaded to a fury, had shot and killed her husband. It was Norma Norton whom the police found on the scene and arrested for the crime. Miss Norton refused to betray the unfortunate girl, who, she felt, had been more sinned against than sinning. She gave Pat Dexter money to make her get-away and allowed herself to be dragged through all the painful notoriety of a murder trial rather than hand over to the authorities the real culprit.

She escaped conviction, as many thought at the time, by a miscarriage of justice, through a lack of evidence. Six months ago she found Pat Dexter alone and ill and penniless in a charity hospital, and brought her to her own home, where she has since attempted to nurse her back to health.

It was evidently in passionate gratitude for Miss Norton's kindness and with consuming regret for all the trouble she had caused her benefactress that Pat Dexter finally confessed the truth. She substantiated her statement with evidence which included the pistol that killed Dan Lowry—the weapon had never been found by the police—and other proofs that satisfied Chief Davis of the truth of her story.

Her confession over, she collapsed. A doctor was called in, but she died as he arrived, and it was discovered that before coming to the station she had taken poison. Pat Dexter expiated with her own life the wrong her long silence had done a woman whose courage and nobility the whole world must applaud.

Norma's eyes filled with tears. So Pat had kept the faith! And what nobler thing can any man do than lay down his life for a friend? A gutter-snipe, thrown when a mere child into a life of crime, victimized by a brute whom it was her fate to love, hardened and cynical, yet at the last Pat Dexter had risen to a height little short of sublime.

"God bless you, Pat, wherever you are," whispered Norma Norton.

AT her house she found a bevy of reporters, but she turned them away. She called police headquarters and asked that Pat's body be brought to her house for burial. It was the last thing she could do for that poor turbulent spirit that had found peace at last. Pat should lie in a beautiful spot, beneath a blanket of flowers—poor Pat!

She was turning sadly away from the telephone when she heard a voice in the hall that froze every drop of blood in her body. It was Rick, her brother.

"Norma" He was in the room. "Oh, my dear, can you ever forgive me? How blind, how stupid I've been! I should have known, I should have trusted you! You never did a mean thing in your life!"

They were in each other's arms. Norma felt as though she had come home from a stormy sea, safe in Rick's arms, her brother whom she had always adored.

"Norma!" He was in the room. murmured brokenly.

She tenderly brushed back his heavy black hair.

"I've missed you so, I've missed you so!" she told him.

"I'm down on my knees to you, begging your forgiveness."

She kissed him.

"If there's anything to forgive, I forgave you long ago," she said softly.

"And you'll take me back," he begged, "me and little Ritchie?"

Norma's eyes lighted.

"I'll be over the first thing in the morning to see you both." Her lips quivered. "I—I'm so behind with kissing Ritchie."

At last he was gone. The house was very quiet. But Norma waited. There was some one else her heart told her to expect.

"Norma!" He was there, his eyes ablaze, his arms outstretched, and with a rapturous cry she fled into them. There was no longer any reason to refuse the most glorious thing life had ever offered her.

"My dear, my dear!" he whispered, kissing the lips she offered so thirstily to his.

"She gave us our happiness," she cried against his shoulder. "Poor Pat, and she did not fail me either. I was so terribly afraid when I first saw those headlines."

"You were afraid she had betrayed Felicia?"

She nodded.

"You see, Pat's story is true, except that she had not telephoned me to come there that night. I went, as I told you, to get Felicia's letters. But Pat had them. She had found them and they were undated. She had always been jealous of Felicia. That is really why she killed Lowry. He made her think Felicia had written them recently. He was always torturing Pat.

"I entered the room the minute after she shot him. She was terribly hardboiled at that time. She swore she would drag Felicia into the case, ruin her. We made a bargain. I agreed to give her money to get out of town and not to give her away to the police if she would keep silent about Felicia and let me have the letters. It was her life against Felicia's honor. She accepted.

"The rest you know, except that when I found her ill and broke and brought her here, it did something to her. She could not understand why I should befriend her when she'd caused me so much trouble. She'd been kicked about all her life till she was terribly suspicious and hard. But little by little she learned that I really did want only to befriend her. She softened and her conscience began to trouble her, and finally"—she sighed—"she found the courage to make amends, to clear my name and yet spare Felicia, at the cost of her own life."

"You mean," said Alaric Temple gently, "you took in that hardened, desperate creature and by your own goodness and charity won her back her soul."

Norma's arms tightened about him.

"You *do* love me?" she whispered.

He crushed her to him.

"I adore you, I worship you!"

And so Norma Norton drained her cup to the last dregs and found, not heartbreak and despair, but happiness so rare, so wonderful, she wondered if life would be long enough to hold it.

Cuddled demurely in his car was a girl of the type he most detested

Twin Hearts

How could he be in love with two girls? Yet—
how could he give either up?

By JUNE JENNIFER

AS Kenneth Farrar strode wrathfully through the thick shrubbery, disgust and determination were registered upon his handsome features. So Joe Malcomb had virtually invited him to leave the party, had he? All right, he was leaving. Pronto! It was a heck of a party anyway.

As far as Kenneth was concerned it was a flop. He felt that he had been lured to the evening's festivities under false pretenses. "A different kind of a party," Joe had promised, and here it had turned out to be the same old thing after all: jazz for music, unusually blatant, blaring jazz: gin for drinks and girls to dance with who were the same old story. Dresses longer at one end, of course, but making up in abbreviation upstairs any additions in the basement area. Some of them with hair growing out, a messy length around their shoulders, but all

with the same lavish display of paint and powder and perfume. Same old sophisticated line.

Well, he had told Joe right out what he thought of the layout, and Joe, having had just enough drinks to make him ugly, had narrowed his eyes in that insolent way he had, and advised him to leave if he didn't like it.

Kenneth's car, rather a neat roadster as medium priced roadsters go, stood in the graveled half circle in front of the house. Pausing with his foot on the running board to light a cigarette, Ken grunted suddenly and leaned forward. Cuddled on the seat, curled up like a kitten, her long, lacy skirts like a circle of froth around her, was a girl, apparently sleeping.

Painted lips, hand arched brows, beaded lashes, artfully reddened cheeks and enough loose hair to stuff a mattress! Kenneth snorted his ardent disapproval.

"I say there," he shouted, shaking her. "This is my car—you've got to get out."

Two great eyes, black in the semi-darkness, slowly unfolded and stared at him blankly. "'Snice car," an argumentative little voice protested. "Darn' nice little car. Don't wanta get out."

"Well, you've got to," responded Kenny ungallantly. The crazy little zany was pickled. Her head rolled like a flower on a wilted stem. He hated them that way. "Get out!"

She giggled, a soft, lazy sound. "Won't! Want a ride."

"I'm going home."

"Want to go home, too."

Kenny looked at her scornfully. "You ought to be home—with your father applying his slipper, and I hope he wears a number eleven! You get out of my car or—or I'll make you."

She yawned, covering her little red mouth with a slim hand. "I'll kick! I'll bite! Scratch! I'll yell if you touch me." She curled her fluffy head up on her arm as if to go to sleep again. "I'm comfy."

Stiffly he climbed in beside her. "I'll take you home—anything to get rid of you. Where do you live?"

She waved in a vague way, indicating either the other side of the shallow bowl where nestled the heart of the little town or the North Pole or all stations in between.

"Over there."

Reaching the other side of the basin he turned to her for more definite directions. She gave him a fiendish, lazy grin, showing little white teeth. "Down there," she said sweetly, pointing back into the depression again, and over to where the foam made a lace edged crescent of the ocean. He made no move to start the car.

"Look here, Nuisance," he told her stiffly, "if this is a game of tag I'm not playing. I'm not using up perfectly good gasoline for the pleasure of toting you around—understand? Next stop out you go whether it is the home place or not. Now where do you live? Answer yes or no!"

She told him, meekly enough. A white house nestling in a clump of dark pines half a mile away. A lonesome light gleaming from an upper window.

A few moments later the roadster came to a stop upon the top of the cliff above a crazy little flight of steps which ran down to the level of the dwelling. He opened the door and helped her out, but with a little helpless giggle she collapsed upon the running board.

"Legs won't work. Carry me."

Little fool! Well, no use arguing all night with a nit-wit.

Picking her up he slung her ungallantly over his shoulder like a sack of meal. But by the time they were halfway down the crazy house stairs, she had wriggled and twisted to a more comfortable position, her slim arms around his neck, her head with its silky, fluffy hair resting cozily against his shoulder.

"Light as a kitten!" Unconsciously he spoke the words aloud.

"Am a kitten," retorted the shameless creature, burrowing her funny straight nose into his shoulder. "Purr! Purr!"

"Cut that or I'll drop you. I'm ticklish!"

He set her down upon the brick porch with a thud and rang the bell very loud indeed.

"Now it's up to your mother to take charge of you. I wish her joy of the job! Good night!"

"Good night!" Quick as a flash her arms reached up, drew down his face, and there was a sweet, stinging pressure upon his astonished lips. Then, through the door that opened silently behind her she scuttled, and all the world was still and suddenly stale and lifeless.

Kenneth stared at the closed door.

ON the way home he stopped once by the side of the road, and drawing a white square from his pocket, wiped his lips. Yes, the white was stained with red. He made as if to cast it over the side of the car, then reconsidered. No use throwing away a perfectly good handkerchief just because a little half-wit had soiled it. He would send it to the laundry in the morning. Folding it carefully he put it away in an inside pocket.

"Just the type I can't endure," he mumbled. But wasn't she sort of cute when she snuggled up and rooted him with her absurd little nose and pretended to be a kitten? Ken liked kittens. Fresh, of course— He hoped he never had to see her again. Glad he lived so many miles away.

But in the morning Kenneth thought perhaps he had better drive over and make his peace with Joe. Poor old Joe, he was a good scout, and it wasn't his fault if he couldn't stir up something new in parties. Joe was a fraternity brother, and it was up to them to stick together. Joe couldn't create a new feminine type when there was no material to work with, could he? He'd go over and apologize for being a crab, apologize handsomely.

It was queer how he lost his way in spite of the fact that the pink stucco house where Joe lived stuck up like a huge but not uncomely sore thumb all over the landscape. Queer how he wandered through the streets until he came to a cliff with a crazy stairway meandering downward to a white house with a brick porch surrounded by rich green pines.

"Perhaps," Kenneth decided, giving the emergency a gentle jerk; "perhaps I'd better inquire here."

A little plump woman in blue with twinkling eyes that matched her dress, opened the door and regarded him with gentle expectancy while he sidled and peered beyond her almost rudely.

"I—er—I'd like—I mean I came to ask—that is—"

The blue eyes smiled. "If you're the young man who brought my daughter home last night I think you will find her in the garden picking flowers for the house."

Kenneth goggled at her gratefully. Amazing woman! Wonderful wom-

an! Was there anything anywhere like feminine intuition? How much better to ask the girl herself the way to Joe's!

A little figure in pink and white checked gingham with skirts just clearing a pair of bare and dimpled knees, stood with her back turned, industriously filling a straw market basket with long sprays of delphinium. Beyond her a rainbow hedge of sweet peas riotted. Her hair was lighter, much lighter, in the sunshine, and was pinned primly in a loose knot at the back of her well-shaped head. She was humming in a low voice, but the sound of Ken's feet on the gravel made her wheel.

They stood staring at each other.

Two lips, firm and pink, the color of the sweet peas waving their fairy heads beyond her, unweighted, curling lashes, now brown instead of black, cheeks clean and white and delicately rounded like an infant's—could this be the shameless, abandoned creature who had invaded his car? Even her scant skirts seemed to his inconsistent masculinity an emblem of unsophistication. A little, old-fashioned girl in a flower garden—the type he had raved about, but never really hoped to meet.

"Your eyes are just the color of these flowers," he blurted.

"Do you think so?" She held a spray against her cheek and something went wrong with his heart. Gosh she was sweet! But—but last night—

He frowned prodigiously.

"Does the light hurt your eyes?"

"No—no—not exactly. It—it's a lovely morning, don't you think?"

"Beautiful!"

She snipped another spray of flowers demurely, her glance shy, her smile elusive. Was she remembering what he was remembering—the burrowing of her little, impudent nose—the stinging sweetness of her parting kiss? Somehow that straight little nose did not look as if it could ever have been guilty of such indiscretion. And as for her lips—they had a virgin, unkissed look. She seemed as far away as the distant clouds. As hard to talk to. Yet he lingered stubbornly until her mother called.

"Dee! Dee! Aren't you ever coming with those flowers?"

Kenny carried the laden basket for her. As they entered the house a fluffy gray kitten, its absurd tail like a miniature scrubbing brush, skittered across the floor and climbed up his trouser leg. Kenneth caught it in his hands and held its warm, furry body.

"'I'm a kitten, purr — purr!'" he quoted.

She looked at him calmly, as if the words had no special significance. Good grief, the girl did not even remember what had happened the night before! She had passed out mentally. A great indignation seized him.

The crowd was to blame—getting a nice, clean, little kid like that soused. No doubt she thought she had to get painted up like a wild Indian to compete with the rest. Good thing she had fallen into *his* hands last night instead of some of the others.

A burning desire to protect her awakened in his bosom. The kid needed looking after, and he was the one to do it! He was the one to do it! He put the kitten down gravely, as if he had been accustomed to the task all his life, helped her to arrange the flowers in their vases.

"Gracious!" her mother laughed. "Decorating for a wedding or a funeral? I said a *few* flowers, daughter."

"Well, they look nice, anyway, Mrs. Graydon," answered Dee with a funny

little bow. "Mother, Ken wants to stay to lunch. I think I'll make some biscuits."

He grinned fatuously. "Didn't know there were girls any more who could make biscuits! And what are you, anyway—a mind reader—"

Kittens snuggled closer. "Big, sweet he-man's!" she cooed

"Well, you have that 'lean and hungry look.' I don't believe you had any breakfast. But, of course if you don't *want* to stay—"

"But of course I *do!* I'll help. I always wanted to learn how to make biscuits."

They were good biscuits in spite of his help. Ken ate seven and made a date to take her riding next day.

ON the stroke of one he arrived. A little figure in a dress of blue transparent velvet that reached to her ankles waited for him upon the porch, her hair concealed beneath a large hat, her cheeks rivaling the bricks beyond her. Lashes heavily beaded, lips a crimson bow.

"Come on, old tortoise," she admonished him when he stopped to stare. "Step on it! We'll have to take those steps in high unless—un-

less—" Her eyes danced at him mischievously.

"Unless we go up the way we came down the other night—huh?" No one could call Ken slow. "All right!"

As he put her in the car her arms clung for a moment as if reluctant to let him go, and deep in her throat he heard a little purring sound. His pulses quickened. "You little devil!"

He stepped on the gas.

"Where are we going?" she asked after a little.

He eased up on the throttle. "We-ell, I was going to take you to meet my mother. We live over beyond Acton, you know. But I just happened to remember she said something about a bridge date, so probably she won't be home now."

"Do you live at Joe's fraternity house or with your folks?"

"Both," he grinned. "I'm here, there and everywhere. Rocky Mountain goat effect. I'm a man of many moods. By the way, how well do you know old Joe?"

She sniffed. "We used to share the same bottle, and the way we pulled hair and kicked each other's shins was something to write to the scandal sheets about. When he grew up he taught me lots."

"He would!" Kenny glowered. "Look here, Kittens, Joe's a great fellow and all that, but—oh—the devil! Let's go to the Golden Fleece and dance. It's just over the next hill."

"I'd love that." She clapped her hands.

He had known she would dance like a feather before she melted into his arms, gazing up into his stern young face with her dancing, mischievous eyes. They looked darker with all that stuff on the lashes. She was so different to-day with her war paint on. She seemed like an actress, changing characters with her make-up. Gone was the pink gingham child completely. A little coquette in her place. At a secluded table bright with gilt she bent to meet his kiss laughingly.

"And yet you don't approve of girls like me!" she mocked him.

The next day she was not at home when he came, but the third afternoon her mother told him that Dee had gone down the river path to the grocery store and would be back presently.

Impatiently he left his car and went to meet her. At the spot where the rustic footbridge arched the shallow river he heard a persistent honking from the paved street, and there was Joe with half a dozen familiars grinning at him with varying degrees of idiocy.

"Welcome to our town!" Joe shouted. "Thought you washed all the local real estate off your hands the other night when you left my party flat! Come over here and give an account of yourself."

"Sorry—I'll be seein' yuh some day," Ken promised, and ducked over the bridge and down the river trail with such speed that he collided with a little person coming from the opposite direction, sending her to a sudden seat upon the ground, her groceries around her, a paper sack of sugar broken in her lap.

Delphinium eyes stared up at him reproachfully.

Kenny's clear cut face flushed. "I'm clumsy as an ox." He bent to help her, dusted off the sugar.

"The can of salmon went into the river."

"If you say the word I'll leap in after it!"

He wanted to make her eyes laugh, to take her in his arms and kiss her.

But she was the pink gingham girl today, only it was blue something or other, and she seemed so remote, so cool, so elusive that he did not dare touch her. How *could* she be so different?

They bought more sugar and another tin of the canned fish, and Kenny stayed to dinner, and in the evening played chess with her for several hours. Because he was absent-minded he was badly beaten. He had never played with a girl before. Where was there another girl in the world who knew the game?

But he was angry because she would not come out on the porch with him when he went away.

"If that isn't just like a girl," he fumed, lighting a cigarette before he started the car. "One moment hot and the next cold! You never know how to take them. Had as much chance to get a kiss to-night from her as from an electric refrigerator! She'd drive a fellow mad! The best way is to leave her religiously alone. I'm through!"

And did the gods laugh—a deep sardonic laugh? Perhaps they did, for the gods foresee.

THE next day found him, afternoon and evening, climbing up and down the crazy crooked stairs, and climbing them in vain. A week passed before he saw her, and then he overtook her on the road outside of town, tripping along in her silly, stilted high-heeled shoes, transparent, pansy-colored skirts fluttering about her ankles, pert, painted face upturned defiantly.

"Kittens!" His brakes shrieked to the heavens. "What are you doing here?"

"Oh, you! Walking home from a buggy ride — maybe! Big Boy, you look sweet to me! Whistle in the puppies—they're all hot and bothered and burn like nobody's business at all."

She climbed in beside him and turned up her lips for a kiss as naturally as a flower lifts its chalice to the rain. He devoured her lips hungrily.

"How can you treat me the way you do?" he demanded. "You know I'm crazy about you! You're never home! You're so sweet—"

She pushed him back. "The bank's closed! I want to go places and do things. Dance! Smoke! Give me a cig!"

"You know I don't like you to smoke!"

But when she blew adorable little white puffs into his glowering face, her larkspur eyes glinting with mischief, he capitulated, and dropping his arm around her, drove happily down the highway.

The first place they dropped into contained familiar faces. Joe and a bunch of his friends stared and giggled like a bunch of grammar school girls on a picnic. The girl gave them a cool, sophisticated little nod, and after they had danced once, demanded to be taken on to another place. They ended by parking where the river poured eternally its silver waters into the greedy ocean, watching the golden moon as it emerged from the heart of the sea.

The girl pointed to a shining bar.

"I bathe there every morning," she said dreamily, snuggling against him. "The mermaids come up from under the water and we frolic together, and sometimes Father Neptune takes me on his knee and coaxes me to come down and live forever in his caves beneath the water!"

"Kittens, darling, don't talk like

that! Don't ever swim out there alone again! There are dangerous currents! Promise!"

She laughed at him. "As if I would! I love it! I know what the wild, wild waves are saying! I know what they say to *me!*"

His face was strained and white. "Please! I forbid you to listen."

She tweaked a lock of hair that had fallen forward. "Regular old maiddums, isn't he? Darlin', I love men with sandy hair and brown eyes like yours! Old he-mans!"

Coax as he would, she would not promise not to swim alone nor tell him the hour when she bathed.

Next morning, early, Kenny arose, and putting on his bathing suit under his overcoat, tossed the rest of his clothes in the suitcase in the back of the car and set out. The white house amid the pines showed no sign of life when he appeared. Ken skirted it and went down to the beach, seating himself upon a log half submerged in the sand. It was not cold, but now and then he shivered as his eyes rested upon the dimpling, treacherous waves before him.

Suddenly he arose, and casting off his overcoat, plunged straight for the water. Out beyond the bar that had been like a huge, silver fish in the moonlight, half hidden by the choppy waves, something crimson and white floated restlessly, like a doll thrown on the waters. Sick with fright he plunged in.

He seemed to hear a voice shouting. A quaint fancy seized him that it was Father Neptune voicing his triumph. With a muttered curse he met the challenge, breasting the turbulent waves that flung him up and sucked him down, viciously splattering his eyes with stinging spray.

Then the thing that he had feared, the thing that had kept him out of the water for years, descended upon him. Dreadful cramps seized and knotted his limbs, and despite his wild, angry struggles he went under with a despairing cry.

Then—

A little white face appeared in the water next his own, a little white fist unromantically raised, and falling like a bunch of steel, hit him squarely between the eyes. Merciful unconsciousness loosened the terrible tension in his limbs.

Next he was lying upon the sand, and a girl in dripping pink gingham was raising his arms up and bringing them down, sobbing and crying forlornly, begging him to live because she loved him so.

"Kenny, Kenny dear—"

Kenny sat up and stared. "You drowned!" he babbled. "I saw you floating out there."

She whimpered. "You did not! You saw an old tube the children painted and left too far down on the beach! I saw you from the house and shouted to you to stop. And—and I had to hit you because you were gripping me so tight and dragging us both down. Ken—Ken—honey—I hated so to hurt you."

He held her close in his arms. So sweet she was, so infinitely precious! His darling little Dee. He kissed her sweet, salty lips again and again. Until at length she pushed him decisively away.

"Think you can walk now? You must take that damp suit off and get something warm to drink. Daddy used to have those dreadful cramps! You ought never to go into the water at all!"

"Put your arm around me and I'll

try," he groaned in a hollow voice. "Tighter—tighter!"

THEY made a great fuss over him, Mrs. Graydon tucking him into bed with hot water bottles for bedfellows, and telephoning his mother who came flying in alarm to bear him away as a priceless treasure wrested from the deep.

"I don't know what got into him," she wailed. "He has been forbidden to swim for years." She looked at Dee, and then smiled suddenly and gathered the girl into her arms and kissed her abruptly before she left the room.

Although he fumed, they insisted upon imprisoning him in his room and treating him like an invalid. The fellows flocked around, and some of the girls came to see him, and received from his mother a maternally magnified and highly colored account of his rescue.

Joe Malcomb called up.

"Heard one of the Graydon twins rescued you from the big briny!" he chortled raucously.

The Graydon twins!

Kenneth dropped the receiver, a sick sensation in the pit of his stomach.

The Graydon twins!

That explained everything — everything! There were two of them instead of one. Saucy, exasperating, luring but lovable little Kittens, and sweet, elusive, darling little delphinium-eyed Dee. He was not in love with one girl of varying moods, but—horror of horrors—with twins! Ye gods and little fish worms! Twins! They both loved him—and which one did he care for?

He crept weakly back into bed and turned his face to the wall. There was no use failing to face facts. He loved them both. Only a Turk or a Mormon could love two girls at the same time, and yet he did. He wanted them both. He could not decide between them if he tried for a thousand years, and he could not give up either of them.

He could not eat. He could not sleep. The family physician fussed and fumed and called a consultation, prescribing nauseous doses that the invalid refused to swallow. Kenny grew haggard and hollow-eyed and thin, and would see no one.

"You can't go on like this," his mother told him. "You've got a visitor downstairs now that you must see."

"I can't see any one. I want to die."

His mother went out without a word, but presently he thought he heard her coming back. At any rate the door opened and some one stepped inside. He felt soft little hands upon his face, and closing his eyes tighter, moaned and thrust them away. Was it Dee—or Kittens? How could he bear to see either, loving the other so?

"Darling, don't act that way! You're breaking my heart!"

"Go away. I'm not fit to live!"

"Not—fit—to—live!" His visitor was silent then. After a moment her soft little voice came again, coaxingly. "Look at me, Ken, darling. Just once. Look at me just once and I'll promise to go away and not bother you any more."

Well, perhaps he could endure to look at her—which ever she was—just once. He longed to—and yet—how could he? He groaned aloud.

"I can't do it. I—I'm a rotter! I—I love you both."

Soft lips touched his cheek. "Lover Ken—look! There isn't any both! I'm Kittens! I'm Dee! Just one mis-

erable, mean girl who deserves never to be forgiven. Just—just me."

He looked at her then. Looked into larkspur eyes brighter for their tears—looked at unbeaded lashes but a bright bow of a crimsoned mouth. Looked with bewildered eyes at a short-cropped head covered with clinging little curls about a piquant, pleading face. At a dress neither pink gingham nor sophisticated velvet, but youthful and dainty, and neither long nor short. He stared and stared, and could not possibly believe the evidence of his eyes.

"Joe said—twins—"

"I know. He told me how you hung up on him. He couldn't understand. But I did—right away. You see there are two of us, but Dorothy got married this spring, and that left just me. I'm Doris, but mother calls me Dee. I'm the home girl—the old-fashioned little flower that everybody writes stories and poems and songs about, but never, never invites to a prom. Only to neighborhood dances—

"And at those dances, more or less a little wallflower, I cannot help but hear things. Like—like your tirade to Joe about the girls at his dance. It made me so darned mad I saw red. I'd been hanging around all evening, hoping you would notice me, and you could not see me at all. So I borrowed a dress from Joe's sister and slapped on her make-up and pretended to be in a condition I was not, and got into your machine. I never expected you to come back and catch me out of character. I just had to make you notice me, discover I was alive."

"But I did come back."

"Yes, you came back, because you were interested in foolish, frivolous little Kittens, not an old-fashioned girl! You are just like the rest!"

He groaned. "I was a silly, egotistical ass! I even wanted to reform you! I actually did! But when I'd get my mind made up to apply blue law principles I'd be so hungry for your kisses that I'd forget; or else you would be sweet Dee again, tantalizingly holding me at arm's length. That morning on the beach, when you saved my life, was the first time I kissed you as Dee.

"And then, when I thought there were two, I could not give you up, and I could not give up my cunning, snuggling little Kittens, either. Honey, I've been an awful fool about the modern girl; it took Kittens to show me how sweet she was, and how darling underneath her pose! I don't suppose you could marry such an idiot!"

"Try and keep me from it! Modern young America speaking!" She giggled. Then she simpered. "This is so sudden!"

Laughing they rocked in each other's arms.

"Which way do you like me best?"

"I love you—adore you—worship you any way you are!" he breathed. "Good time girl, cunning little jazz jane, or demure, flowerlike little Dee, out of the dear, dim days when skirts stopped short at the knees. Just be what you like, honey doll—variety is the spice of life, but you, my own darling, are the very core of my existence. Marry me to-morrow?"

"Old-fashioned girls believed in long engagements."

"Kittens, angel, snap out of it! I want you now."

"All right, whenever you say! Bring on the minister—only it *is* sudden just the same!"

"Nonsense!" Ken snapped. "I've loved you both forever! Now kiss me some more."

Which both Kittens and Dee did.

"I hate him!" she was sobbing. "Oh, if I could only kill him!"

Cast Aside

Scorned and humiliated, Cecelie wields the shining sword of her hate to slay the specter of unwanted love

By RUBY M. AYRES

ROGER BUCHANAN, visiting at Newquay, overhears Cecelie Vanstone, a poor girl, tell her friend Kathy that she thinks Roger a snob. "I'd love to meet him, lead him on, and then tell him what I really think of him!" she says. Roger does meet her, and they fall in love with each other. Philip, Roger's brother, and Louise, Philip's wife, recognize in Rosa Desmond, a dancer, Roger's wife, whom for ten years he had thought dead. Roger decides to tell Cecelie that he'd made a fool of her in revenge, since he can't marry her. He meets the girl that evening on a cliff beside the sea, and Cecelie's dream is broken.

CHAPTER IX

"MAN'S BLIND WAY"

KATHY, fresh from her walk and ready for luncheon and news, burst open their bedroom door and stopped dead. Cecelie knelt on the floor, stuffing her few

poor clothes, anyhow, into her one shabby trunk, and her face—

Kathy dropped on her knees and flung her arms around Cecelie's neck.

"Oh, my poor dear, what is it? What has happened?" she asked quiveringly. Kathy read tragedy in her friend's eyes and ashen face.

"He's made a fool of me!" Cecelie's voice sounded old and cracked. "He never cared for me. It was all pretense last night—all fooling. He's just the cad I said he was when we first came here."

"Oh, Cecelie, what *are* you saying?" Kathy protested. Buchanan, who had been so kind to them both!

"I know what I'm saying. He overheard what I said to you that evening, do you remember? He's just done this to hurt me—to humble me."

She sat back on her heels; the hands which Buchanan had so passionately kissed only last night hung loosely at her sides. For a moment all vitality seemed to have left her body; her eyes stared with blank incredulity at the half empty trunk before her.

The black evening frock lay tumbled on top of the other things; it looked curiously limp and shabby, shorn of its veil of romance.

Suddenly Cecelie clenched her hands; her white face flashed into passionate life and hatred.

"Oh, if I could kill him! If I could only *kill* him!" she moaned.

CHAPTER X

A BARGAIN

ROGER BUCHANAN came to lunch when nearly every one else had finished.

When Louise saw her brother-in-law she rose hastily and left the room. Even her iron fortitude could not face him at that moment.

She and her husband had both noticed the empty table where Kathy and Cecelie usually sat.

"Do you think he has told her?" Mrs. Buchanan asked nervously.

Philip shrugged his shoulders.

"I don't know—saw them on the cliff path together just now. Poor old Roger!"

"Such sentimental rubbish!" Louise protested vigorously. But she avoided meeting Roger herself.

He came into the room without noticing her hurried exit, and sat down next to his brother. A waiter hurried attentively up.

"Soup, sir?"

"Yes — no; no, I don't want any soup—I don't want anything."

"Try the lobster," suggested Philip sympathetically. "It's good."

It was easier to agree than refuse.

"All right—lobster," said Roger.

The waiter brought the most tempting morsel he could coax from the chef, but Roger left it untouched: he, too, had seen the empty table.

"It was fine in the sea this morning," said Philip with an effort to rouse his brother. "I took the youngster in—not a bit afraid of the waves, bless you! Went out on my back with all the confidence in the world."

No answer; Roger was staring out of the window with blank eyes.

Philip pushed his plate aside.

"Buck up, old chap!" he said in an undertone.

Roger started, and took up a fork; he ate a morsel of his lobster, and then forgot it again; he poured out a glass of water and drank it off at a gulp.

Philip watched him anxiously.

"They haven't been in to lunch," he said at length, indicating the empty

table. He paused. "Does she know?" he asked awkwardly.

"The truth? No! I just—just told her it was all off." Roger pushed back his chair—he could not stand the sight of that empty table. "Let's go out," he said in a stifled voice.

The brothers went into the lounge together. A group of girls, of whom Miss Smee was the center, called to them invitingly. Roger did not glance at them, Philip called back some bantering remark.

A knot of people were gathered in the open doorway—the hotel bus stood outside.

"Some one leaving?" asked Philip casually.

"Miss Vanstone and Co.," Miss Smee said in a stage whisper.

"*What?*" Philip stopped.

"Yes." Miss Smee's sharp eyes looked after Roger. "Have they quarreled?" she asked pertinently.

Philip was standing open-mouthed; he had not bargained for this. He wondered if his brother knew.

Roger had nearly reached the door — the bus was turning about in the drive to take the path back to the village. In a few quick strides Philip overtook him.

"Let's go out the other way," he said hurriedly. "I want to show you something."

Buchanan looked back at him.

"Let's see the bus go first," he answered aimlessly. "Who's leaving—any one interesting?"

He spoke for the sake of speaking; there was only one person in the hotel whose movements were of the least interest to him—and she had gone out of his life forever.

Philip answered hurriedly, "I don't know—nobody much. Come on, will you—"

A man standing near who had overheard Roger's question looked round.

"It's Miss Vanstone and her friend," he said.

ACROSS the sea a ray of golden sunlight pierced the gray clouds and fell upon the little town; and in a back seat of a day coach in a train speeding Manhattanward, Cecelie sat with hard eyes and close-pressed lips, wondering how she could ever, *ever* drag herself through all the years of life still left to her.

From the window of her expensive private sitting room in the hotel Louise Buchanan watched the heavy bus down the road to the village.

She knew quite well whom it bore away in its stuffy upholstered interior, for she had encountered Cecelie in the lounge when she came out of the dining room to avoid Roger.

Cecelie was obviously dressed for traveling; she wore a plain suit, and a soft little felt hat. Kathy stood beside her, flushed and unhappy looking, with unmistakable marks of tears on her face.

Mrs. Buchanan hesitated when she saw them, then with sudden, spiteful impulse she rustled toward Cecelie.

"Are you going away, Miss Vanstone?" she asked in a high, artificial voice of dismay. "Isn't it a very sudden decision? I am sure my brother-in-law does not know."

The eyes of the entire lounge were upon Cecelie, but the girl held her head high.

For a moment she looked her enemy full in the eyes, then, without the slightest sign of recognition she turned her back and walked away.

Miss Smee giggled nervously; she did not really like Louise Buchanan, though she was anxious to keep in with

her. If it had been any one but Cecelie she would have rejoiced at the snubbing that had been administered.

Louise turned scarlet with rage, she could have killed herself for having spoken to the girl at all. Had it been possible she would have forgotten her dignity and rushed after her, screaming vituperation in her fury.

She went up to her own room and watched till the bus had driven off; then she put on her hat and ordered the car, or rather Roger's car, which she used as her own.

She drove down to the village as far as the sloping road that leads down to the little harbor, then she dismissed the car and proceeded on foot.

Once or twice she glanced behind and around her apprehensively, as if afraid some one might see and recognize her; but there were very few people about, and she hastened her steps.

She pushed open the iron gate of the house where Roger himself had called only that morning. She rang the bell and asked in her haughty voice for Mrs. Roger Buchanan.

The maid-of-all-work, summoned from the kitchen in too much haste to wipe her black hands, stared.

"There ain't anybody of that name here," she said.

Louise frowned. "Is there a Miss Desmond, then?" she asked.

The girl's face brightened. "Oh, yes!" she said cheerfully.

Louise entered and was shown into the room where Roger had seen his wife only that morning, and the door was shut.

IT was twenty minutes by Louise's diamond-set watch before a creak on the stairs was followed by a turning of the handle and Roger's wife stood on the threshold.

She had obviously dressed for the part. She wore a flowered chiffon gown which suited her admirably; a pink rose was tucked in her velvet belt.

Louise rose from the uncomfortable chair where she had been sitting, staring out of the window, and advanced with outstretched hand.

"You are Roger's wife, are you not?" she said in her most sugary tones.

Rosa Desmond stood still; a shade of suspicion crossed her beautiful face.

Louise smiled.

"I am his brother's wife, you know," she said pleasantly. "Philip's wife—you know Philip, don't you? He spoke to you last night after the entertainment. We enjoyed it *so* much—your dancing is beautiful."

There was a little silence; Rosa Desmond looked at the elder woman with cool assurance.

"Won't you sit down?" she said.

She was not one whit deceived by this apparent friendliness; her quick brain was merely wondering what this woman wanted.

"I suppose Roger didn't send you, did he?" she asked.

"Well, no"—Louise was somewhat taken aback—"but of course we all know the romantic story—"

"It's not romantic at all," interrupted the other coolly. "Roger hates me. He thought I was dead. He was honest enough to say he hoped I was. If he did not send you, why have you come?"

Her lovely brown eyes rested with a sort of triumph on the other woman's hot, flushed face. Louise had not bargained for this; she did not know how to respond.

"I don't know that I'm not sorry for Roger," the other went on sud-

denly. "He's a good sort, really. He made a fool of himself when he married me. If he sent you here to make terms, I'll not be unreasonable.

"I don't want to bother him—I've let him alone for ten years, and I'm not likely to worry him now. I can make money myself—and I refused to take his when he offered it this morning, but I've thought it over since, and I think I was a fool. You can tell Roger that I'm quite content to lie low if he likes to make it worth my while."

She sat down on the edge of the table and balanced her feet on the seat of a chair. "I'll take fifty thousand dollars," she said affably.

At that moment there was something hopelessly common and degenerate about her in spite of her undoubted beauty.

Louise Buchanan sat motionless.

"You might tell him, too," the other went on slowly, as if she were weighing each word, "that—well, there is such a thing as getting rid of me *permanently*—see?"

"What do you mean?"

Rosa laughed. "D-i-v-o-r-c-e." She spelled the word slowly.

Mrs. Buchanan rose in agitation.

"But, my good girl," she said in exasperation, "that's exactly what we all want to avoid! Roger *wants* his freedom! Didn't he tell you—didn't he tell you there was another woman in the question? He got engaged to her, thinking you were dead! She is nobody—a girl he met here in the hotel.

"If he marries her it means ruin for us all. I have a son—it has always been an understood thing that he will be Roger's heir. If he is free of you and can marry again, my boy will be an absolute beggar."

Louise's voice was tragic; she really believed she was an object for pity.

Rosa listened quietly; there was faint scorn in her velvety eyes.

"Lord!" she said at last when the other stopped. "What a lot of sharks poor Roger's got for relatives!" She sat silent for a moment, her chin in the cup of her hand; then:

"So there's another woman in it, is there?" she said slowly.

She was looking far back into the summer when she first knew Roger. He was only a boy then—a boy of whom she had soon wearied—and yet, compared with the jaded life she had lived since she parted from him, those early days of foolish passion seemed very sweet and to be desired.

A sort of sullen jealousy crept into her face.

"What's she like?" she asked abruptly.

Louise answered eagerly:

"Oh, nothing to look at—just a shopgirl, and dowdy. She ran after Roger from the first day they met—you know how weak men are. Of course she knew he was rich. She liked being taken out in his car; she liked to imagine herself as Mrs. Roger Buchanan," added Louise artfully.

"Oh, *did* she?" said Rosa.

She sat up very straight, her level brows frowning, a spot of angry color in either cheek. Across ten dividing years she was listening to the voice of the boy Roger as she had heard it on their wedding day, remembering how he had lifted her hand with its new wedding ring and kissed it.

"Mrs. Roger Buchanan—my wife," he had said softly.

Louise was quick to see the change in the beautiful face before her, quick to guess at the sullen, dog-in-the-manger love that the knowledge of a rival had roused in the dancer's heart.

She pressed her case capably.

"She's the sort of girl Roger would never be happy with," she declared plaintively. "She's quite, *quite* unsuited to him! I am *fond* of Roger—"

"Humph!" said Rosa dryly.

Louise rose to her feet; she felt that further subterfuge was impossible.

"Look here, Miss Desmond," she said, "let us be honest with each other. *You* don't wish Roger to have his freedom any more than I do. You wouldn't care to see him married again, would you—to a girl without even your beauty to recommend her?"

"Thanks," said Rosa with sarcasm.

"I want my son to inherit his uncle's wealth. Roger will soon forget this girl, once he finds it impossible to marry her; and you—why, you can get much, *much* more out of him than fifty thousand dollars! His income must be at least double that a year. I'll stand by you if you'll stand by me. Is it a bargain?"

The velvety brown eyes fixed themselves on Louise Buchanan's face. "We're both a pair of rotters," she said bluntly.

Louise flushed dully.

"You may think what you like," she said recklessly, "if you'll help me keep Roger from this girl." She held out her perfectly gloved hand; it trembled with eagerness. "Is it a bargain?"

Rosa looked at it. Suddenly she laughed shrilly.

"Oh, yes—I suppose so," she said.

CHAPTER XI

REALIZATION

KATHY never forgot that journey back to New York. In after years it stood out as the most tragic spot in the whole of her colorless life.

The sun crept out from behind the clouds as the train drew slowly out of Newquay station, as if ashamed to shine when such heartbreak and disillusionment had devastated two lives; it spread its long golden beams across the fields and shone in at the window of the day coach where the two girls sat.

"Do you think that bag is safe over your head?" Kathy asked Cecelie anxiously. "If it were to fall you would have a nasty knock."

Cecelie glanced up indifferently.

"It's all right," she said; then leaned her chin in the palm of her hand and looked out of the window.

She was thinking of the early morning when she had landed at the little station; the eager expectancy which had filled her heart then of great things about to happen.

Well, she had had her share of the romance for which she had always longed—and it was over.

Kathy watched her wistfully. After the first bitter outburst Cecelie had held her peace; she would not talk of what had happened—she said that she never wished to hear Buchanan's name again.

Just before they left the hotel she had walked down to the edge of the sea and thrown something far out into the blue water. Kathy knew what it was—a dead rose which Buchanan had given her one night to wear in the shabby evening frock. He had kissed it before he gave it to her—Cecelie had kissed it many times since.

With sudden impulse Kathy leaned forward.

"Cecelie," she said in a troubled voice, laying her hand on the younger girl's. "Cecelie, are you sure you are not making a mistake, dear? I can't somehow believe it! He didn't look

as if he were pretending—he was always so nice!"

Cecelie did not answer, but she moved her hand away from her friend's.

Kathy went on:

"I wish, now, that I had spoken to him myself—I meant to, only we went away in such a hurry. I can't help feeling sure there is some explanation, if only—"

Cecelie's eyes flashed.

"The only explanation is that I've been a fool," she said in a hard voice. "I want to forget it. Kathy, you're never to speak about him to me again. If you ever write to Mr. Buchanan, or try to see him, I'll never forgive you as long as I live—do you hear me?"

"It's not at all likely that I should," Kathy protested. "But if it had been me—I should have made sure first—quite sure that—"

"What surer proof could I have than his own words?" cried Cecelie passionately. "A man doesn't admit that he has behaved like a cad and a brute just for fun—does he?" She flung out her hands with a gesture of helplessness.

"Never mind those morals of yours! Will you back up my story or won't you?"

The train sped on toward New York—the hot afternoon sun flooded it and made it unpleasantly close.

The picture of Newquay Bay in the sunlight danced torturingly before Cecelie's eyes. She wondered what every one at the hotel was doing—what Roger was doing—if he had gone out in

his car—if, perhaps, he had taken Miss Smee, or his sister-in-law; if, perhaps, he was telling some of his friends of the way he had fooled and tricked her.

In the first agony of pain she believed him capable of anything.

Her mind went over again, hour by hour, the few short days of their acquaintance, from the first moment out on the cliff that night he had followed and spoken to her, to that morning—*only that morning,* was it?—it seemed a century ago—when he had told her that it was all pretense—all a sham!

How clever he had been! So clever that never by word or action had he allowed her to suspect that he was anything but genuine. She recalled hours she had spent in his company; the way he had looked at her—the tone of his voice—the touch of his hand—the feel of his arms only last night when he had kissed her. A little moan escaped her.

If only she could force herself to forget him—if only she could keep her thoughts from ever turning toward him again! But whichever way she looked she saw his thin, brown face and compelling eyes; heard his voice in the onward rush of the train; heard his deep laugh.

"I will not think of him — I *will not,*" she told herself desperately—but it was useless. If she closed her eyes she saw his tall figure against the background of blue sea and blue sky; if she opened them she heard his voice and his laugh.

IT seemed an eternity before they reached the city. When at last the train slowed down, Cecelie got up with a long breath of relief.

Kathy had put her book away, donned her cotton gloves, and hauled down their bags and packages. The familiar sounds of New York were all about them—the opening of doors, the voices of porters, the grind of taxicabs.

"I don't know how we're going to manage all these parcels," said Kathy distractedly.

"We'll take a taxi," Cecelie answered. She beckoned a hovering red cap, while Kathy looked on in dismay.

"It 'll cost at least a dollar," she said. "We could have left your trunk here and taken the subway."

Cecelie did not answer; she felt impatient even with Kathy—Kathy who never failed her. When the taxi came she got in and left the older girl to see to the luggage and tip the porter.

"I gave him a dime, and he seemed quite pleased," said Kathy as she climbed in beside her friend and deposited various parcels on the opposite seat. She looked out of the window at the gathering twilight.

"It's rather nice to be back home after all, isn't it?" she asked. "I wonder if Mrs. Wrigley's baby has cut any more teeth."

Long before the cab stopped at Mrs. Wrigley's house, she had her head out of the window, looking eagerly up the street.

"She's put up clean curtains, Cecelie," she cried in a pleased voice. "And the window box is full of red geraniums; and, oh, there's Mrs. Wrigley at the door with the baby in her arms! She got your wire all right, then."

Cecelie did not answer; there was a dreadful sense of finality in her heart. She felt like an escaped prisoner who after a few days of glorious liberty is dragged relentlessly back to prison.

Kathy scrambled out of the cab laden with her parcels, ran up the steps and kissed the baby; shook hands with Mrs. Wrigley, told her what a lovely

time they had had, and what a beautiful place Newquay was; what a tremendous amount of food there had been to eat at each meal, and how many times she had been in the ocean; all this before she got into the house.

"You look well, miss, I must say," Mrs. Wrigley observed. "You look a sight better than Miss Vanstone does, anyway."

"I'm tired," said Cecelie hurriedly. "It was so hot in the train."

"Well, I'm glad to see you both back, that I am."

"We're glad to be back," said Kathy. "There's no place like home. Is there, Mrs. Wrigley?"

Mrs. Wrigley looked pleased. She was an excellent soul; she had done her best for the two girls, and it was highly gratifying to hear her second-floor-front alluded to as "home." She went away and closed the door after her.

Kathy immediately began to undo her parcels.

"It *is* nice to be home," she said again in her cheery way. "The room looks smaller, though, somehow, doesn't it?"

"Yes," said Cecelie. She felt as if the walls were closing in upon her—she thought despairingly of the big rooms from which they had just come, with wide windows open to the sea and the grassy cliffs.

Mrs. Wrigley opened the door again.

"I forgot to tell you," she said apologetically, "that a gentleman called here this morning. He wouldn't leave no name, but he wanted to see Miss. Vanstone very partick'ler, he said.

"I told him you was both away and not coming back till Saturday, so he said he'd call Saturday night or Monday. Then your wire come, just as he was going, so I ran after him and told him that you'd be home this evening. He looked very pleased, and said he'd call to-night—about eight."

"I wonder who he is?" said Kathy, mildly amazed. "Who do you think he can be, Cecelie?"

"Some book agent, I should think, if he wouldn't leave a name. Did he look as if he was selling, Mrs. Wrigley?".

Mrs. Wrigley bridled.

"That he didn't," she protested warmly. "He was a gentleman!"

"Heavens!" said Cecelie cynically. "It couldn't have been the president, I suppose, could it?" she asked with a weary attempt at levity.

Mrs. Wrigley laughed and went down the stairs, her face overspread with smiles.

"I wonder who it was!" Kathy said interestedly. "It seems rather funny, doesn't it? We don't *know* many men, do we?"

"Not men who are rich enough to be called 'gentlemen,'" Cecelie answered in a tired voice.

She got up from the table and walked over to the window, where she stood looking out on the narrow street and the row of brownstone fronts, each looking like the rest.

For a moment she closed her eyes and thought of Newquay Bay—the wide stretch of blue sea, the fresh salt breeze blowing in across the grassy cliffs. For a moment, in imagination, she walked the golden sands with Buchanan, heard his voice, and met the worshipful gaze of his eyes. *That* had been her glimpse of paradise. This?

She opened her eyes with a desperate prayer that *that* might be the real—these last hours a cruel dream!

For a moment she stared blankly at the narrow street and the line of houses that all looked alike—Kathy's kindly voice was droning platitudes—instead of Buchanan's deep voice—

"Such nice new towels," Kathy was saying contentedly. "I wonder if Mrs. Wrigley made them or bought them."

Cecelie swung round—she felt as if something had snapped in her brain. She put up her hands blindly to her eyes—and before Kathy could move or reach her she fell senseless to the floor.

CHAPTER XII

THE VISITOR

EVENING.

Kathy sat at the window of Mrs. Wrigley's second-floor-front and looked out into the warm darkness with troubled eyes.

A shaded lamp burned in the room behind her; yellow lights from the windows of the houses opposite pierced the darkness like venomous eyes. Away in the distance was the roar of traffic and the shrill voice of a newspaper boy crying an extra.

Kathy leaned a little forward and peered at the small face of the watch on her wrist. It was nearly nine o'clock.

For three hours Cecelie had lain in a sort of heavy stupor which was neither sleep nor unconsciousness. Between them Kathy and Mrs. Wrigley had put her to bed behind the long curtain which screened the bed from the rest of the room.

"She does look bad, poor dear!" said Mrs. Wrigley with deep concern. "It's a touch of the sun, maybe."

"Perhaps it is," Kathy agreed as she bathed her friend's hot forehead and white face. "I wonder if I ought to have a doctor, Mrs. Wrigley?"

Mrs. Wrigley did not think it necessary.

"He'll charge you at least three dollars," she said, "and do no more for her than you or me. Wait till the morning and see how she is then."

That was three hours ago, and Cecelie still lay with closed eyes.

Once Kathy left her seat by the window and tiptoed across to the bed.

"Cecelie!" she whispered anxiously.

Cecelie opened her eyes.

"Oh, leave me alone—do *please* leave me alone!" she moaned piteously.

Kathy went back to the window; in her heart she knew that this was no case for the doctor — that there was only one man who could cure the heartbreak with which Cecelie was wrestling. Only one man, and he was miles and miles away, laughing and talking and amusing himself with Miss Smee and her kind!

Kathy could almost find it in her heart to hate Buchanan as she sat there, afraid of the heavy silence behind her, looking out over the darkening street. Suppose Cecelie were to die! There was real terror in the thought.

For four years the two girls had been like sisters; for four years they had shared the room at Mrs. Wrigley's, and put up with the long hours and weary drudgery of the department store.

Kathy was an orphan—she could remember her parents, and wished only to forget them. They had never cared for her—she had never been wanted. Beyond that there was nothing romantic in her life, and she knew quite well that there never would be.

Some people are made like that—

from the day they are born a pathway stretches before them, unbroken by great emotions or happenings till it leads them to the grave.

But it was different with Cecelie. Even Kathy's undiscerning eyes saw that she was different from the rest of the girls in the store.

"I don't know how you can stay here," Kathy had said to her one day in a moment of inspiration. "You were meant for something better."

Cecelie laughed.

"I'm just waiting for that something to come along," she said. "I'm a fatalist, if you know what that is, my dear! I believe that if anything is going to happen to any one it will, no matter what you do to prevent it or how you try to hurry it on. My mother was like that, too. She—" Cecelie stopped. "Am I boring you?" she asked.

Kathy was deeply interested, and said no—she had been wanting to ask about Cecelie's people, but had not liked to do so.

"I should love to hear about your mother," she said.

"She dead!" Cecelie answered abruptly. "She died a year ago—just before I met you. I wanted to go on the stage, but I hadn't the money to wait till I could get something, so I just came here. But I won't stay. Some day—" She broke off with a shrug. "What's the use of building castles in the air?" she asked scornfully.

"I should think it's a lot of use for any one as pretty as you," said Kathy simply. "Haven't you a father, or any brothers or sisters?"

"No. I suppose I had a father, but my mother never spoke about him—he left her when I was a child. I dare say he's dead; but I don't know or care—he must have been a brute, anyway!"

SITTING at the window in the summer night Kathy's thoughts went back across the four years of her friendship with Cecelie. It seemed impossible now that she had ever managed to get along without her. It seemed more impossible still to imagine an empty future.

Kathy rose to her feet and took herself determinedly to task.

It was nonsense to think that Cecelie might die! People did not die of broken hearts. Cecelie would get over her disappointment in time, and life would go on just as it had before their fateful journey.

Life would go on just as it had! Ah, but that was what Cecelie had so dreaded — the dreary routine of life, getting up at the same hour summer and winter, standing behind the same counter, coming back to Mrs. Wrigley's second-floor-front and going to bed.

For the first time, standing there in the hot, silent room with its faint, sickly scent of eau-de-cologne, with which Mrs. Wrigley had insisted on bathing Cecelie's head, Kathy realized dimly something of what this life must mean to the younger girl.

With her beauty and high spirits, Cecelie had been born for something greater and wider than this narrow existence; at Newquay, despite her inadequate clothes, Cecelie had seemed in her right sphere.

She had been at her best with Buchanan. She had never looked or felt awkward in his company as she, Kathy, was painfully conscious of having done. She was just the wife for him—just the woman to grace his table and uphold his name!

And yet—it had all ended so soon in disaster!

"Poor, poor Cecelie!" said Kathy in her heart, and the tears rushed to her eyes as she remembered her friend's happy face during those last few short days.

"They were made for each other," she told herself. "Just made for each other! I can't understand it; I can't—I can't!"

A bell sounded through the house. Kathy moved hastily to the bed—she hoped the noise would not disturb Cecelie. But Cecelie had turned on her side, her cheek resting on her hand, long lashes down-pointed in sleep.

There was a faint tinge of color now in her white face, her lips were a little parted in a smile. If she was dreaming, they were happy dreams, thought Kathy thankfully as she went softly away and opened the door.

Mrs. Wrigley was just coming up the stairs. She spoke to Kathy in a stage whisper:

"The gentleman's come!"

"What gentleman?" asked Kathy blankly; then all at once she remembered.

"Oh, but Cecelie is asleep!" she said hurriedly. "He can't see her. Tell him to leave a message."

"I told him, miss, and he said as he'd see you."

"*Me?*"

Kathy looked dismayed. She hated strangers. She never knew what to say to them. Mrs. Wrigley read refusal in her face; she whispered another appeal.

"Come down and speak to him, miss. He's such a nice gentleman."

"Oh—very well!" said Kathy reluctantly.

She followed Mrs. Wrigley slowly downstairs.

At sight of her a man, standing just within the door, turned abruptly.

He was rather a tall man. He wore a light overcoat over evening clothes, and there was an undoubted diamond in his shirt front.

"You are Miss Vanstone's friend, are you not?" he asked.

Kathy nodded.

"Yes," she said. "You can't see her," she added with a spurt of bravery. "She's not well. If you would like to leave a message I'll tell her in the morning."

The man smiled—Kathy's bluntness amused him.

"I'm sorry she's not well," he said. "And I'm sorry I'm later than I said I should be. I told your landlady that I would be here at eight—it's past nine now, I see. My car broke down on the road and we had to wait while repairs were being made."

For one mad moment Kathy thought he might have something to do with Buchanan—the next she realized the impossibility of such a thing. This man had called before they left Newquay—he had not even known they had gone there!

"If you think I could see Miss Vanstone in the morning," the stranger went on, "I will call then; if not—" He paused. "Perhaps you will ask her to let me know when it will be convenient." He drew a card from his wallet. "That is my address," he added.

Kathy took the card. She read the name on it carefully—then she gave a gasp.

"Templeton Vanstone!"

And underneath, written in pencil, was the name of a Fifth Avenue hotel.

The card fell from Kathy's nerveless fingers.

"Who—who are you?" she asked

breathlessly. "You've got the same name as Cecelie!"

The man laughed.

"Well," he said humorously, "that's not greatly to be wondered at. Is it? You see, I happen to be her father!"

CHAPTER XIII

A PARTING

KATHY finished arranging a great bunch of roses in their best big bowl, and carried them over to a small table beside Cecelie's bed.

"There!" she said triumphantly. "Doesn't the sight of them make you want to get up and take an interest in life again? Gosh, Cecelie—if ever there was a lucky girl in this world—"

She broke off as she saw the expression on her friend's face; she stooped hurriedly and kissed her.

"I'm sorry, dear," she said remorsefully. "You know what I meant—that it's all like a fairy tale—your father turning up after all these years with oodles of coin, and a car, and everything you can want. I thought I must be dreaming that night we came back from Newquay when I went downstairs to see him, and—do you know that it's nearly two weeks ago?"

"It seems longer to me," said Cecelie.

She looked very pale and listless—there was a sort of lackluster in her eyes as if she had journeyed all round the world and found nothing to hold or interest her.

She had not been ill in the generally accepted sense of the word. The doctors called it a nervous breakdown, and said that perfect rest and quiet were the only cure. So they had allowed her to lie and sleep away the golden summer days, rousing her only for food.

"I think you ought to show a little more interest in him," Kathy pursued, busying herself about the room. She had managed to get a temporary leave of absence from the store in order to nurse Cecelie. Kathy loved nursing—she was never so happy as when she was mixing gruel or shaking up pillows or administering medicine.

"He's been so awfully decent," she went on. "Ever since you've been ill he's called every day—and look at the things he's sent! I *do* think you might see him—just for a moment!"

"I don't want to see him," said Cecelie petulantly. "I can't get up any enthusiasm over a man who deserted his wife and allowed her to think he was dead for more than twenty years! I suppose he *is* my father, if what he says is true; but I hate him all the same."

"He's not the sort of man you *could* hate," said Kathy quickly. "And"—she hesitated, looking doubtfully at Cecelie—"can't you see that this is just the chance you've always longed for? Can't you see that he's more than willing to take you with him and tell everybody who you are, and spend his money on you—and give you the sort of life you've craved to have? Don't you remember that afternoon at Newquay, when you—"

She broke off, shocked at her own blundering mistake. Tears rushed to her eyes.

"Oh, I'm so sorry, dear!" she cried. "I'm so silly—I always seem to be hurting you, when I would rather *die* than do it!"

"It doesn't matter," said Cecelie. She smiled faintly and put out her hand. "I'll have to get used to it, so I may as well start now." A splash

of color suddenly dyed her wan cheeks.

"Do you know, Kathy," she said in a low, shaken voice, "if it wasn't for one thing—just one thing—I'd refuse to have anything to do with my father—if he is *really* my father! I'd let him see that I wasn't going to accept anything from him after the way he treated my mother; but I've been thinking it over while I've been lying here."

She sat up, leaning on her elbow, and a sudden light sparkled in her eyes.

"Do you know what I mean?" she asked.

Kathy shook her head. "No—unless it's because he's rich and—"

Cecelie laughed contemptuously.

"Do you think I care for his money? No, it's not that; but if—as he says—he can take me into society—don't you see that I might meet—might meet— Oh, you know who I mean!" She could not force herself to speak Buchanan's name.

Kathy gave a little eager cry.

"Oh, Cecelie—you mean that perhaps it might come right after all—that there might be some explanation—that you'd forgive him, and—"

She broke off, almost shocked at the fierce bitterness of her friend's face. "Oh, what *do* you mean?" she asked in a troubled voice.

"I mean," said Cecelie relentlessly, "that I might be able to pay him out for what he has done to me, if I could meet him on his own ground. If I were well-dressed; if I had money—if I were *some one*"—she laughed shrilly—"instead of just a shopgirl!

"Oh, how shocked you look! Poor old Kathy, you can't understand—and I can't explain. But since we came home—"

She broke off, staring before her with brooding eyes, as if she were looking back over the past that had been like some horrible nightmare.

"I think I've grown to hate him more than I ever loved him!" she added with slow intensity.

Kathy made no answer, such depths were beyond her. She believed in forgiving her enemies—but then she had never had one that really mattered!

"I don't think I could ever hate any one I had once loved," she said presently in a puzzled voice. She had read the sentiment somewhere in a book and applauded it in her own gentle mind.

Cecelie made a little impatient gesture—it was no use trying to make Kathy understand. She gave it up.

BUT Cecelie began to mend from that day.

Revenge is not a worthy stimulus, but it dragged her back from the listlessness and hopeless inertia into which she had fallen. When Templeton Vanstone called the next day, Kathy told him that Cecelie would see him.

"She's up and dressed," she said delightedly. "But she's very weak still, so you mustn't excite her, please!"

Vanstone smiled at Kathy's grave face.

"Very good nurse," he said humorously.

Kathy flushed. She stood aside and let him go up the stairs alone.

Vanstone paused outside the closed door for a moment before he knocked. He was conscious of an almost absurd nervousness.

He was going to see his daughter—a grown woman, past her twentieth birthday.

The last time he had seen her she

had sat in a high chair with a bib round her neck, regarding him with solemn eyes.

He had walked out of the room, then, in a rage—and out of the life of the woman whom he had left sobbing in broken-hearted abandon. Vanstone was not proud of the memory.

Suddenly Cecelie flung open the door. He could only stare.

As he stood outside Cecelie's door he seemed to see in swift panorama before his eyes the past twenty years, and he was forced to admit that there was very little in them of which he could be honestly proud.

His whole life had been selfish—pleasure seeking.

He had married Cecelie's mother because she was pretty and because he wanted her; he had left her because he had grown tired of her, and because he wanted to be free. For twenty years he had buried himself on the other side of the world, and it was only when a lucky deal made him a wealthy man that he thought once again of the woman he had married—and the child who had watched him walk out of both their lives with such solemn eyes.

So he had come home, and weeks of search had led him only to his wife's grave in a dreary corner of a big New York cemetery.

Who knows what feelings of remorse and grief filled his selfish heart as he stood there and looked down at the narrow bed where his wife lay sleeping? Perhaps such men cannot feel remorse, but the simple stone cross with her name and age carved on it seemed like a silent reproach to him.

CECELIE
Wife of Templeton Vanstone
Aged 45 Years

Cecelie — the little name that had once been the sweetest music in the world to him! What a pretty girl she had been! He wondered if she had changed much in the twenty years since he left her.

They had called the child "Cecelie," too. With something of a shock he realized that his daughter must be past twenty!

What had become of her? What

was she like? Some forgotten memory of the careless affection he had felt for the solemn-eyed child in her high chair stirred again in his heart. He would find her. He would make up to her with his wealth for his neglect of her mother.

It had been easy enough to find Cecelie—and yet, now that he stood with only the door between him and the daughter he had deserted, shame kept Templeton Vanstone hesitating there.

What would she say to him? What did she know of his parting with her mother?

There was a slight movement from within, the handle was turned and Cecelie herself stood in the doorway.

FOR a moment they looked at each other silently; there was defiance in Cecelie's eyes, abasement in the man's. Then he held out his hand.

"Cecelie!"

She was so like her mother as she stood there, that for the moment Vanstone forgot all that had passed, and was back again in his youth with the woman he had loved and deserted.

Cecelie opened the door wider.

"Please come in!" she said faintly.

She was trembling a little, she had made up her mind to hate this man. It was humiliating to find all her animosity and resentment dying even as she looked at him.

He followed her into the room and closed the door. The air was heavy with the perfume of the roses he had sent her.

Cecelie stood with her hand on a chair back. She hated herself for the sudden weakness that shook her body. With a desperate effort she forced herself to meet her father's eyes.

She had meant to tell him that she had no use for a man who could brutally desert wife and child; she had meant to let him see that there was no affection in her heart for him. But all at once she found herself crying childishly, miserably, big tears running down her face.

"Cecelie! Cecelie!" said the man again.

He put his arms round her and gently pressed her head back to his shoulder. "My poor little girl!" he said. "My poor little girl!"

Cecelie was looking out of the window when Kathy came into the room.

"Well?" said Kathy uncompromisingly.

Cecelie put an arm round her shoulders.

"He's going to take me away next week," she said.

"Oh!" said Kathy blankly. There was a moment's silence, then suddenly she burst out crying.

"It isn't that I'm not glad—for your sake," she sobbed; "but what shall I do without you? I simply *couldn't* stay on here alone where we've always been together—and the store will be hateful without you."

Cecelie shivered. It seemed impossible that she was never going back to wait upon fretful customers; it seemed too good to be true! She wondered if she would wake from this dream as she had wakened from that other—if this man who had painted such a golden future for her was lying, even as that other had lied!

"Listen, dear!" she said, keeping her arm round Kathy's heaving shoulders. "Oh, don't cry—there's nothing to cry for! Surely you didn't think I was going to walk away and leave you here, to go on drudging day after day as you have? I've told—father"—she hesitated a little over the unaccustomed word—"all about you;

and that whatever happens you will always be my best friend; and he said that, of course, you were to come with us."

Kathy drew back decidedly.

"It's very sweet of you," she said, mopping her eyes; "but I couldn't think of such a thing! I must earn my own living. I could never be happy any other way."

It was surprising how decided she was about it—no argument or pleading could move her.

"I love you more than any one in the world," she sobbed forlornly; "but I could never give up my independence—even for you."

She held to her resolution through the last week that they were together; she packed Cecelie's few belongings for her; helped her buy new clothes with the money her father gave her; went through the whole sad leave-taking with iron fortitude; even stood at the window to wave good-by and not a tear escaped her till the big car that bore Cecelie away to her new life had turned the corner.

Then she flung herself across her bed.

CHAPTER XIV

BUCHANAN DINES

CECELIE never forgot that first evening of her new life.

Her father had taken her to the hotel where he had been staying since his return to the States.

"We can have an apartment or a house later on, if you care about it," he told her. "But for the present I thought you would prefer to stay in the hotel. The people will amuse you—there are always fresh people coming and going."

He looked at her almost wistfully—he was very anxious to please her and make her happy.

"Whichever *you* like the best will please me," Cecelie told him.

She felt a little strange and lonely; she longed for Kathy and the quiet homeliness of their room.

She stood looking round the big room with a feeling of desolation. It was all very grand and imposing—much more so than the hotel at Newquay had been. She wondered why she did not feel happier; this was what she had always longed for—and yet—There was a lump in her throat and tears in her eyes as she thought of Kathy and Mrs. Wrigley and the latter's fat baby.

She took off her hat and coat and sat down on the side of the bed. A long mirror in the door opposite reflected her grave face and slim figure in its new, smart clothes.

What a long cry it seemed back to that day when she and Kathy had gone down to Newquay! How much had happened since—and yet it was barely a month ago!

She thought of Buchanan—and her face hardened. It no longer hurt her to remember him; her heart felt like a stone in her breast.

With deliberation she conjured his face to her memory, feature by feature she traced it in imagination—the gray eyes and thick brown hair that waved a little where it parted; the clean-shaven mouth that could smile so irresistibly; the tall, lithe figure with its slightly stooping shoulders.

What was he doing now? She wondered dully. How had he passed the long days since that last morning when he and she had walked the cliffs together? Did he ever think of her? Did he ever remember— She rose to

her feet, catching her breath sharply. After all it had not quite gone—the sting and bitter pain. She moved across to the dressing table and mechanically began to dress for dinner. . It seemed odd to be dressing for dinner again. She thought of the shabby black frock over which she had spilled the soup, and a wry smile twisted her lips.

What would Mrs. Philip Buchanan say if she could see her now? It brought a hard gleam of satisfaction to the girl's chill heart to know that in future she would be able to dress as well and expensively as this woman who had so hated and snubbed her.

Presently, when her toilet was finished, she turned on all the lights in the room and stared at herself anxiously in the long mirror.

She was wearing one of her new frocks; it was made of soft, white satin, almost classical in its simplicity. Yet she knew as she looked at the reflected image that in it she was—beautiful.

What would Buchanan think of her if he could see her now? Would he have treated her differently if, down at Newquay, he had known her to be what she was—the only daughter of a wealthy man who was willing and able to gratify her every wish?

A sudden revulsion of feeling swept through her; for a moment she hid her face in her hands, trying to still the bitter cry of her heart.

"I would give it all—*all*—if he only loved me—if he would only take me in his arms again!"

BUT there was no trace of emotion in her face when presently she joined her father.

Vanstone was a handsome man, and he was at his best in evening dress. A little thrill of pride went through Cecelie's heart as she looked at him. As they crossed the lounge together toward the dining room, she slipped a hand almost shyly through his arm.

He looked down at her. "Are you pleased to be here, Cecelie?" he asked.

She nodded; her fingers tightening on his arm.

"It seems like a dream, doesn't it?" she whispered.

It was all like a dream; the long dinner, the smart people around them, this man—her father—opposite, so attentive, so anxious to please. Cecelie felt the blood tingling in her veins; there was a flush of excitement in her face.

More than one man, passing down the long room, looked admiringly at her; more than one woman scrutinized her pretty face with a shade of envy on her own.

Vanstone was proud of his daughter. Possibly had she been a plain, awkward girl he would have contented himself by making her a generous allowance and letting her go her own way. But he loved beauty above everything; it reflected credit on himself that this dainty girl was his own daughter.

He knew nothing about Roger Buchanan; Cecelie had made Kathy promise never to speak of it to a living soul.

Cecelie thought of Kathy now as she sat there in the brilliantly lit room. Something seemed to seize her by the throat, and she pushed away the ice she had been eating. How selfish of her to enjoy herself so when Kathy—tears swam in her eyes. Dear, patient, unselfish Kathy.

Vanstone saw the sudden shadow.

"What is it, Cecelie?" he asked.

She told him as best she could—she said she could not bear to think of her friend's loneliness.

Vanstone looked perplexed. He had liked Kathy for her honesty and downrightness; he, too, would have liked to do something for her.

"We must think it over and see what can be done," he said kindly. "I should have been glad for her to have come with you—"

"I know; but she wouldn't—she's so independent. Dear old Kathy—nobody ever had a better friend than she's been to me."

"We must see what can be done," said her father again.

Cecelie looked round at the crowded room. Perhaps some day when she was dining like this, or walking in the street, or sitting in the theater or somewhere where people gathered she would see again the face of the man who had taught her the meaning of love and left her to learn its bitterness.

Perhaps somewhere, some day, she would meet the steady gaze of his gray eyes or hear his laugh or—

Her hands clutched each other convulsively in the lap of her frock; she felt as if every drop of blood in her body were suddenly frozen; she knew that her face had gone marble white. For there, coming toward her, threading his way down the long room between the crowd of little tables, was Roger Buchanan!

CHAPTER XV

THE CUT DIRECT

BUCHANAN came down the long room listlessly, as if he had just drifted there without any definite aim or object. He was in evening dress. An attentive waiter, who evidently knew him, hurried forward to serve him.

After the first shock of seeing him, Cecelie recovered her self-possession. She leaned across the table and began talking and laughing with her father.

She did not glance again in Buchanan's direction, but she knew that he had taken his seat at a small table a little to the right of hers—that he was facing her—that in another moment he must see her.

She plunged recklessly into conversation, hardly conscious of what she was saying; she felt only that if she were silent for one moment she must faint or scream, or do something desperate.

Vanstone readily fell in with her mood; Cecelie had hitherto been very silent with him. There were a thousand things he wanted to know about her life and about her mother's death.

He threw the ball of conversation back spiritedly, little guessing what underlying tragedy was responsible for the feverish excitement in his daughter's face.

Buchanan sat looking before him listlessly; there was a sort of detached loneliness about him that was somehow pathetic in the midst of all the laughter and gayety.

Then suddenly, as the orchestra stopped, and there was a momentary lull in the chatter around him, he heard Cecelie laugh.

Only the ghost of the merry, wholehearted laughter he remembered as hers, and yet the sound of it almost stilled his heart as he sat there, afraid to move or look up.

He knew it was not Cecelie. How many times had he tortured himself with the picture of her back again in the drab, monotonous life which she had said she so loathed, growing to hate him and his memory, turning for distraction to some other man?

The hidden orchestra broke out again into a popular selection; the buzz of conversation and laughter rushed on, and Buchanan lifted his eyes slowly and looked across at the table where sat the girl whose laugh had reminded him so acutely of Cecelie's—*and it was Cecelie!*

He sat like a man turned to stone; for a moment he was not conscious of emotion of any sort.

Cecelie! This girl radiant and laughing, beautifully dressed and queenly, dining at one of the smartest Fifth Avenue hotel restaurants with a man who—

With an effort he tore his eyes from her face and looked at her companion. A man in the prime of life; a handsome man still, despite his fast-graying hair.

It *could* not be Cecelie! He sat a little forward, staring at her with burning eyes. She was leaning back in her chair now, and the man opposite was offering her a cigarette. As he pushed the case across to her his hand touched hers, and for a moment rested there lightly.

BUCHANAN never knew how he kept himself from springing to his feet; he ground his teeth to keep back the smothered cry that rushed to his lips, and, as if conscious of his agony, Cecelie turned her dainty head and looked full at him.

There was no trace of recognition in her beautiful eyes; her lips smiled serenely, as after a moment's careless scrutiny of his white face she turned again to her companion.

"Your order, sir?" said the waiter at Buchanan's elbow.

He moved a little to allow the man to attend to him. His mind was in a whirl. It *was* Cecelie—there was no longer the smallest doubt in his mind. A train of horrible suspicion turned him sick.

A month ago she had been a drudge in a not-so-smart department store. And now—she looked as if she had been used to Fifth Avenue hotels and beautiful frocks all her life.

Who was this man with her?

A mad impulse to leave his seat and go across to her and take her away with him forcibly rushed through his soul. She was his—he loved her better than his life!

To look at him as he sat there, a well groomed, rather bored-looking man, nobody would have guessed the torment that was consuming him, the throbbing of every nerve in his body.

He had guessed that some day they must meet again; he had never dreamed it would be so soon, and in such circumstances as this. He had shed tears of blood during the past days, thinking of her, and apparently she had not needed his pity.

He had never seen her look so radiantly beautiful. Surely he had forgotten the sweet curves of her face—the masses of soft hair that crowned her little head—the whole daintiness of her.

He struggled through a pretense of dinner; try as he would to keep his eyes from Cecelie's face, he found himself looking at her again and again.

Unhappy as he had been since they parted, it was nothing to what he suffered now as he sat there and saw her laughing and talking with another man.

And she had given him the cut direct! Evidently he had done his work only too well on the wind-swept cliffs that last morning; he had made her believe that he was the cur and cad he had wished her to believe him.

His very being revolted now at the memory of what had been then only an honest desire to spare her.

Why had he not told her the truth instead of shattering her faith in him? He had been a fool—a fool!

Cecelie had risen from her seat; the man took her silken wrap from the waiter, and himself placed it carefully about her.

"I have tickets for the show at the New Amsterdam," Buchanan heard him say. "Do you care to go, or are you too tired?"

"Tired?" echoed Cecelie; she raised dancing eyes to the man's face as he folded her wrap about her. "I'd love to go!"

Buchanan sat there in helpless misery, cursing himself and her, and most of all the woman Rosa who had brought his castle in ruins about him.

And in another moment Cecelie would walk out of his life once again—the soft satin of her gown brushed his arm as she passed him on her way out of the long room; the perfume of a rose she wore reminded him relentlessly of the night he had given her just such a flower to wear in her black frock. He had kissed it before he gave it to her—afterward she had told him that she would always keep it.

He turned a little in his chair and looked after her down the room. She had just laid her finger tips on the arm of the man who escorted her—his smiling, handsome face was looking down at her tenderly.

Buchanan rose to his feet and beckoned for his check; he felt he should go mad if he sat there any longer. As he got into his coat he saw something white lying at his feet. It was a woman's handkerchief, Cecelie's handkerchief!

He tossed the waiter a bill and told him to keep the change; he caught up the little perfumed square and made his way out of the room, pushing impatiently through the maze of tables.

If he were quick he would be able to see her again—to speak to her—to hear her speak to him.

Cecelie and her escort were at the door. Buchanan went up to them.

"Pardon me—I think you dropped this—"

There was a little silence. Cecelie turned slowly; there was a set smile on her lips.

"Oh, thank you!" She looked at her father. "Please take it for me, will you?"

The handkerchief changed hands; Vanstone thanked Buchanan and turned away. Outside at the curb stood a luxurious car; big headlights flaring through the night.

Buchanan stood looking after them as Cecelie and the man entered. The doors were slammed by an attentive doorman and the car glided away.

Buchanan went up to the man, who was smilingly pocketing a tip.

"Do you know who that—that lady and gentleman are?" he asked with dry lips.

The man shook his head.

"They only came to-day, sir," he answered.

"You mean — they are staying here?"

"Yes, sir — the gentleman has a suite of rooms here, sir."

Buchanan's face was ghastly as he turned away and strode out into the night. He walked on and on, through the park, till he found himself finally on Riverside Drive.

The soft breeze from the river filled the night; myriads of lights twinkled across the water; a starry sky smiled placid approval on the great city.

But Buchanan's tortured imagination saw nothing but the luxurious interior of the car that had just carried away the woman he loved and the smiling, devoted face of the man who escorted her.

BUCHANAN had arranged to meet his brother at nine o'clock, but he forgot all about the appointment. After having waited an hour for him, Philip began to get anxious and went off to the club to see if Roger had been there.

He found him in the smoking room, and took him home.

Louise Buchanan, returning late from the theater, met her husband coming down stairs. He looked worried.

"What do you think—" she began excitedly, then stopped. "Is anything the matter?" she asked. "Where's Roger?"

"I've just put him to bed—I found him at the club—drunk."

Louise drew her white shoulders together in a shrug. "He's a fool!" she said sharply. "He'll kill himself if he goes on like that. Dr. Martyn told him—"

"Oh, I know—but I don't think he cares much if he dies or not," Philip interrupted gloomily.

His wife threw aside her furred wrap and tapped a pointed toe on the polished floor.

"Who do you think I saw at the theater to-night?" she asked suddenly.

Philip shook his head.

"Lindbergh?" he asked disinterestedly.

"Stupid!" said his wife. "No—it was that Miss Vanstone."

"Good Lord!"

Philip's mouth dropped.

"Did she see you?" he asked.

"Yes, I am sure she did — I was with the Selbys in the first row of the orchestra."

"And she was in the gallery, I suppose—eh?"

"No, she was not," said the wife flatly. "She was in a box, with a man — a very smart-looking man. Goodness knows where she picked him up! I couldn't believe my eyes at first, she was so well-dressed! She's soon consoled herself for Roger, anyway." She laughed with a sort of chagrin; it had pleased her to think of Cecelie as disappointed and unhappy.

"I always knew she wasn't any good," she finished spitefully. "A nice thing it would have been for us all if Roger had married her!"

Philip made no answer—it was not always that he had the courage to disagree with his wife.

CHAPTER XVI

"AND I NEVER TOLD HIM!"

VANSTONE was as good as his word with regard to Kathy.

He talked the whole matter over with Cecelie the following morning; he was really anxious to help his daughter's friend. With all his faults, and they were many, he was a generous man.

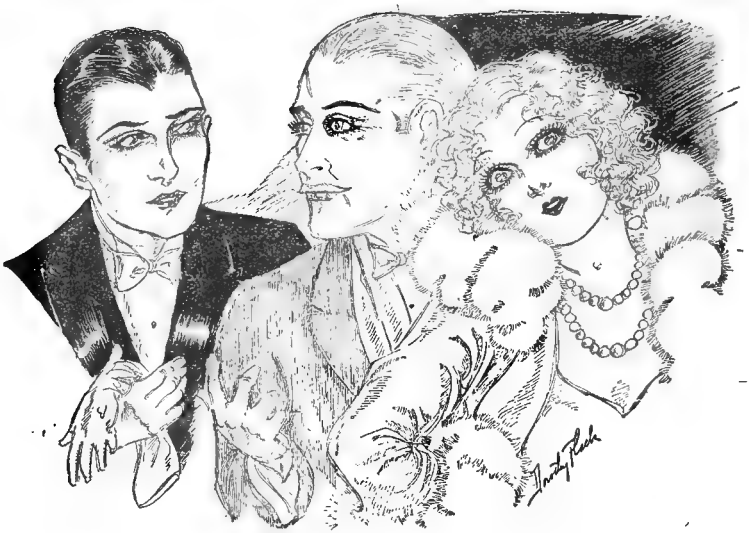
When he heard that it had always been the dream of Kathy's life to take up nursing, he said that the thing was as good as done.

Cecelie rushed off to Mrs. Wrigley's; she knew what time Kathy came home, so she and Mrs. Wrigley planned a surprise for her. When Kathy climbed the stairs, tired and dispirited, she found Cecelie waiting for her.

The two girls hugged each other. It

was only two days since they had met, but to one of them at least it had seemed a lifetime.

Kathy laughed and cried together when she heard her friend's news.



"I think you dropped this." But Cecelie did not glance at him. "Will you take it, dad?" she requested

"It's too good to be true!" she said again and again. "To think I can really take up nursing at last. I've just longed for it all my life! Oh, Cecelie, you are a darling!"

Cecelie was very much touched by her friend's gratitude. After all, it was such a little to do. She thought with a sense of guilt of all the money and luxury her father had lavished on her during the past two days.

"It isn't anything," she protested. "I only wish you'd let me do more for you. If you'd only come and live with us?"

"I wouldn't like it any more than *you* would," said Kathy in her downright way. "You've only to look at me to know that I'm not fit for society. I'd be scared to death of all the people I'd have to meet, and I'd look a sight in smart clothes! Cecelie, do you know how lovely *you* look, I wonder?"

She gazed at her friend with honest admiration.

"Father's so extravagant," said Cecelie. "I'm afraid to say I like anything, because he buys it immediately. He must be a very rich man, Kathy."

"He's a very kind man, too," said Kathy warmly. "Aren't you beginning to get a little fond of him, Cecelie?"

Cecelie hesitated.

"I suppose I shall," she said at length. "If only he hadn't been so cruel to mother—" she broke off. "It's

no use thinking about that, though, now, is it? And I am sure he is trying to make up for it. Kathy, I saw Mrs. Buchanan at the theater the other night."

"Oh, Cecelie!"

"Of course I didn't notice her."

Kathy chuckled.

"She must have been wild—to see you looking so lovely and prosperous," she said delightedly.

Cecelie made no answer; she was wondering whether she should mention having seen Roger, but somehow she could not bring herself to speak of him.

She insisted on taking Kathy back to the hotel for dinner. Kathy did not want to go; she said she had no fit clothes to wear; she said that she would be hopelessly out of it, but Cecelie overruled all her objections.

"If you're going to keep away from me because I'm well off," she said with pretended anger, "I'll come back here to live with you."

Kathy gave in. She always did give in to Cecelie over small things. And, after all, she thoroughly enjoyed herself.

FOR the next few days Kathy lived in a whirl of excitement. She resigned her job at the store, finished her week there, and shed a few tears when she turned her back on it forever. In her way she had been happy there, because she had not expected much. As she told Cecelie afterward, it was a great risk starting life afresh; one never knew what might happen.

"You can't live in the same cabbage patch all your life," said Cecelie, laughing. "And you'll love working in the hospital; you know it's what you've always longed for."

Cecelie was right; before Kathy had been in her new surroundings three days she wrote that she had never been so happy in all her life before. She adored all the nurses and doctors; she did not mind the hard probationer's work a bit; she had always loved getting up early.

Cecelie showed the letter to her father.

"What an enthusiast!" he said. "Well, it's a good thing we all haven't the same tastes. You look tired, Cecelie."

The girl laughed.

"Do I? It's all the late nights we've been having. I'm not used to so much gayety, you know."

She got up from the table—they had been breakfasting in their own rooms—and walked over to the window.

It was a golden Indian summer morning, with a mild breeze blowing; but the city was limp and fagged after the hot summer. Cecelie thought, with a stifling longing, of the blue sky at Newquay and the fresh wind on the cliffs.

In a way she was happy enough with her father; she liked the excitement and luxury of her new surroundings; but she was not really satisfied. She was always conscious of a vague indefinable longing in her heart; a sort of groping through darkness for something which eternally evaded her.

She had not seen Buchanan since that night in the hotel restaurant; but every day she dreaded that some freak of fate would again cross their paths.

She tried not to think of him; she wanted to be happy. Hers was not a nature content to give way to melancholy and heartbreak; she hated the misery she was still forced to suffer. She would have given anything had it

been possible to wipe those disastrous weeks out of her life.

"How would you like a few days at the shore?" Mr. Vanstone asked.

He was watching her with anxious eyes. Cecelie had grown to mean a great deal to him during the short time they had lived together; he dreaded that she might weary of life with him and want to go her own way again.

His idea of misery was a house in the country, which was why he had first begun to weary of Cecelie's mother. She had loved the solitude of the country where she might live unnoticed; he had hated it.

Vanstone had thanked his lucky stars that Cecelie was not like her mother in this respect; he made his suggestion now more from a wish to please her than any desire of his own to leave New York.

"Shall we run down to Atlantic City for a week or so?" he pursued. "Or Newquay? Do you care for golf, Cecelie?"

Cecelie turned sharply.

"I *hate* Newquay," she said vigorously.

He raised his brows.

"Really! Your friend Kathy told me how much you both enjoyed your vacation there."

"Did she? Well, she was wrong. I loathe the place—I hope I shall never see it again." There was a little quiver in her voice which she tried in vain to steady.

"Well, then, we won't say any more about it," he told her readily. "I only want you to be happy and have a good time. Are you tired of the hotel? Would you like to take an apartment or a house?"

"Oh, no, father, I'm quite happy—please don't think I'm not. You're much too good to me as it is."

He rose and came to stand behind her, putting an arm round her waist.

"I've got only you in the world, you know," he said, "and I don't deserve that you should be so content to stay with me. It's too late for regrets; but if you only knew, Cecelie, how often and bitterly I have regretted what's past and gone—your poor mother—"

He broke off.

Tears swam suddenly in Cecelie's eyes.

"Men don't understand," she said gently. "They just don't *understand* what it means to a woman if they grow tired of her, or neglect her, or—oh, I can't explain what I mean—but sometimes love means everything—just *everything!*"

There was a passionate ring in her voice, something fierce in the close fold of her lips.

VANSTONE put a hand beneath her chin and turned her face so that he could look into her eyes.

"Why, Cecelie!" he said in dismay. "Who has taught you to feel like this? Why, my dear—"

Cecelie moved from his encircling arm.

"Now you're imagining things," she accused him with forced gayety. "But you're quite, quite wrong. There isn't a man in the world I would marry if he asked me on his bended knees."

"I'm glad to hear it," said Vanstone, though his eyes still looked a little anxious. "I don't want to lose my daughter just as I've found her."

"It won't be so easy to do that," she threatened him gayly. "And now, what are we going to do to-day?"

"We'll take a run out Westchester way," said Vanstone. "Get your bonnet on."

"Bonnet, indeed," laughed Cecelie, and she made an indignant little *moue* at him as she turned to leave the room. "It's only old ladies who wear bonnets," she declared.

She looked back at him from the open doorway laughingly; suddenly she closed it again and came back to where he stood by the window.

"You're very kind to me, you know," she said, coloring shyly.

Pretty speeches came awkwardly to Cecelie's lips; it had never been easy for her to express her feelings adequately, but Vanstone seemed to understand.

"My dear, I am only too happy to give you everything in my power," he said with some emotion. "It's only small reparation I can make, after all, for what's gone. But I am glad that you'll never want, Cecelie, whatever happens. When I die—"

She laid soft fingers across his lips.

"You're not to say that!"

He looked pleased.

"You don't quite hate me, then, Cecelie?"

She hesitated; colored a little in confusion, then put her arms around his neck and kissed him for the first time of her own accord.

"There," she said playfully, to cover what she feared he might consider a display of sentimentality. "I never do that unless I like a person very, *very* much!"

She kissed him again softly, and ran off to get ready.

Cecelie did her best to enjoy that drive with her father; she determinedly exerted herself to talk and amuse him. It was not her fault if her thoughts would fly back to that morning seven weeks ago when she and Kathy had taken their first drive with Roger Buchanan.

It was all over and done with; he was not worth a thought; she hated him; she only lived to hurt him for the way he had treated her. All this she told herself over and over again, but it made no difference. She was haunted by the memory of that drive, of his presence beside her.

For a moment she closed her eyes, pretending that when she opened them again she would see *his* face beside her instead of her father's.

Perhaps none could ever understand the depths of misery through which Cecelie had dragged herself during that week after her return from Newquay. By nature she was very proud; she felt what had happened far more keenly than could a more humble nature. Perhaps it was pride that suffered even more than affection. And yet—her short-lived happiness during those few days had far exceeded even her most ambitious dreams.

"What are you thinking?" asked Vanstone at her side, and Cecelie, startled by his voice, came back to the present.

They had left the city behind. Hedges and trees were dry and dusty, but beyond were glimpses of cool, green, well-cared-for grounds, restful to the eye.

The car sped along, and Cecelie leaned back luxuriously.

A thrill of pride shot through Vanstone's heart as he looked at her. It was something to have come back after years of exile to find this girl waiting for him; this girl who looked at him with her mother's eyes, and forgave him for all that had gone before.

"What are you thinking of, Cecelie?" he asked again.

Cecelie laughed, not mirthfully.

"You wouldn't believe me if I were to tell you," she said.

"No? Try me."

She sat up with sudden energy. For a moment her white teeth caught her lower lip hard, then:

"I was thinking of the person I hate most in all the world," she said deliberately.

There was a little silence.

"I remember your mother once saying," said Vanstone then thoughtfully, "that to hate a man or woman much, one must first have loved that man or woman very much. I hope it is not true of you, Cecelie?"

They were nearing a bend in the road; the chauffeur sounded the horn in deep-toned warning.

Cecelie began to speak, then suddenly she started to her feet with a smothered cry.

"Father!" She clutched at Vanstone's shoulder.

A laden truck, rumbling along in front of them, had all at once pulled to the wrong side of the road. For a moment it seemed as if a smash was inevitable, but with a sudden swerve of the wheel the chauffeur got clear.

He made a mighty effort to steady the car, but the wheel skidded in the loose surface dust of the road.

There was a horrible grinding wrench, and Cecelie remembered nothing more.

WHEN she came to herself she was lying propped against the bank that bordered one side of the road; the hot sun was pouring down on her face, and some one was trying to force water between her lips.

She opened puzzled eyes on the face of a man bending over her. She lay quite still, wondering who he could be; she could not remember ever having seen him before.

A few yards away a laden truck was drawn up at the roadside. Smithers, the chauffeur, was standing near it. There was a stream of blood running down his face—*a stream of blood!*

Sudden memory rushed back to her. She tried to stagger to her feet, but the strange man kept her down.

"Lie still. You'll be all right directly. The car turned over. You're not hurt, are you?"

"No, no." She felt weak and incoherent; she resented this man's authoritative manner. "Smithers is hurt—let me get up. Smithers is hurt, and where—where is my father?"

She struggled fiercely against the man's detaining arms. After a moment he let her go.

She got to her feet, feeling a little dizzy and sick; every bone in her body ached. She looked around helpless, blinded for a moment by the hot sun.

Then she saw a long, dark shape lying by the roadside, covered with a rug from the car—a long, dark shape like a man's body.

Cecelie did not scream, but she felt as if every drop of blood was slowly ebbing from her heart. She moved forward mechanically, and stooping, turned a corner of the rug back from the face of the man who lay there.

He was dead. Cecelie had seen death before; and even if she had not, it can never be mistaken, for it wears a majestic finality all its own which stamps it as something utterly, utterly different from its twin-brother, sleep.

"Dead!" She spoke the word aloud vaguely, as if it held no meaning for her.

The strange man standing beside her put a hand beneath her arm. She wondered with a sort of weary contempt if he expected her to scream or faint.

"He was dead when we picked him

up," he said gently. "He must have struck on his head. If it had not been for him you would have been killed. He had his arms around you—his body saved you—"

Cecelie looked at him vaguely; she heard what he said, but the words conveyed nothing. Suddenly she dropped on her knees beside the dead man.

"Oh!" she said with a little bitter cry. "And I never told him that I had begun to love him. Oh, I wish I had! I wish I had!"

CHAPTER XVII

A CHAPERON FOR CECELIE

"IF you really mean what you say," said Cecelie with a touch of exasperation in her voice, "the only thing left for me to do is—advertise!"

"Advertise?" Kathy echoed the word blankly.

"Yes." Cecelie fell to pacing the room restlessly.

The summer had gone; chill winds were beginning to blow; there was a suspicion of snow in the air.

A whole month had passed since the death of Cecelie's father. Only a month? Sometimes it seemed to Cecelie that she had lived ten years since that morning when she and Kathy went down to Newquay.

"You all tell me that I can't live by myself," she said now, with a shade of petulance in her voice. "If I were thirty I'd snap my fingers and do as I liked! But, unfortunately, I'm only twenty-five — and rich, Kathy; sometimes it makes me afraid to think how rich I am!"

"I don't think it's anything to be *afraid* about," said Kathy prosaically. "If there is, it's the kind of fear most people like to have."

Kathy was wearing her nurse's uniform; she was very proud of it. As a matter-of-fact, it suited her a hundred times better than her ordinary clothes.

Cecelie had just asked her to give up nursing and come back to live with her, and Kathy had refused.

She had spent the last half hour trying to justify that refusal, and now she began all over again.

"It wouldn't do, Cecelie, dear; I'm not a bit the sort of girl to chaperone a girl like you—rich and beautiful—"

Cecelie made an impatient gesture. "You're the only friend I've got in the world. I think it's the least you can do."

Kathy sat staring before her. Her hands were folded hard in her lap; her mind was troubled.

"If you put it like that—" she said at length, slowly.

Cecelie rounded on her.

"I *don't* put it like that! I only *ask* you! We've always got on well together; but if you really don't want to come—"

"It isn't that; why will you persist in saying it is? You want some one who will take you out and about—a society woman who can introduce you to all the people you ought to know. How can I do that? Can't Mr. Geddes suggest something?"

"It was Mr. Geddes who suggested advertising. He says that there are heaps of society women who would willingly take me about and let me live under their wings, so to speak, if I paid them. Doesn't it seem a queer kind of profession — hawking eligible girls?"

"I'd advertise and see what happens," said Kathy.

If she had been sure in her own mind that it was her duty to give up her work and live with Cecelie, Kathy

would have done it without a word; but she was not sure.

She could see the difference in their two natures, even though Cecelie chose to ignore it. She knew instinctively that she was not at all the kind of companion her friend needed. She would have given her life for Cecelie, if need be; but in this matter she was obstinate.

"You want an older woman," she said again. "Some one who will look after you."

Cecelie laughed recklessly.

"*Look after me!* What an idea! I've always managed to look after myself, haven't I?"

"I know. But it was different before you had all this money. All the men will be after you; they'll all want to marry you, and you'll want some one to keep them off, and see that you choose a really nice man."

"I'll never get married!"

"People always say that," said Kathy calmly. "And it's very silly. Look in the glass, and then have the audacity to say it again."

Cecelie obeyed half impatiently; she caught a momentary reflection of her slim figure, black robed and somber, and her face, just now a little flushed and angry looking.

"I shall never marry," she said again impetuously. "I *hate* men!"

She walked over to the window and looked out.

"THERE'S something I want to tell you," said Kathy suddenly. She looked a little embarrassed; she kept her eyes from Cecelie's face.

"Well?" Cecelie did not turn from the window; she knew by instinct what was coming.

"I heard our house surgeon talking about—about Mr. Buchanan the other day," Kathy began slowly. "Of course he did not know that I knew him. He has been abroad since—since we left Newquay; for his health. I suppose you didn't know."

"I? How should I know? It's of no interest to me."

"No, dear; but I thought I'd tell you. Dr. Graeme said that he was returning to town this week."

"How interesting!" There was bitter sarcasm in Cecelie's voice. Kathy winced; it hurt her to hear her friend speak in such a tone.

She got up and walked to her.

"Cecelie," she asked bravely, "have you quite, *quite* forgotten him?"

Cecelie's fierce eyes met hers unfalteringly.

"Could *you* forget a man who treated you as he treated me?" she asked harshly. "No, I haven't forgotten him; but if you mean do I still *care* for him, *no!* A thousand times no! I think I hate him more than any woman has *ever* hated a man." She drew a deep breath. "Don't talk about him, Kathy. It—it just rouses the *devil* in me!"

She broke off with a shaky laugh, and walked over to the desk.

"Come and help me word an advertisement," she said.

Cecelie found life very wearisome after her father's death; she was lonely and bored, and the weight and responsibility of her newly acquired wealth depressed her.

She missed her father more than she would admit, even to Kathy; she had not realized till he was gone how much she had really grown to care for him. His tragic death left a horrible sense of blankness in her life.

John Geddes, Vanstone's lawyer, had done his best for the girl; but he

was old and out of date; he could not keep pace with Cecelie's advanced ideas. She shocked him, and he filled her with angry impatience.

"You forget that I'm not a child," Cecelie challenged him once angrily. "I've had to work for my living; I've earned my living for years. Why can't I be allowed to live alone now?"

"Because now it's quite different," he insisted mildly. "You are young, beautiful, and, above all, an heiress. Your father left me as trustee. I must insist that you observe the conventionalities a little. When you marry—"

"I shall never marry," Cecelie interrupted.

He spread his hands deferentially.

"That is entirely a matter for you to decide," he said with a ghost of a smile.

But he got his own way about the chaperone; a few judicious inquiries, an advertisement and one morning he went around to Cecelie. He carried a bundle of letters in his hand.

"I have had some most satisfactory replies to my inquiries," he said, even as they shook hands. "Some ladies in the most exclusive set." He selected a letter and handed it to Cecelie, but she shook her head.

"I don't want to read them. Decide as you please. I shall hate it anyway, but you seem so determined."

"If you really mean that, my dear young lady, I have already picked out the reply which I consider to be the most suitable. The lady can give excellent references, which, by the way, are hardly necessary. I know the family quite well, and they have some of the oldest blood in their veins.

"I am sure you will like her, and find her in every way desirable. She is willing to take you everywhere, and introduce you to everybody worth knowing. Of course you can make what arrangements you like. She is very anxious to have a personal interview."

Cecelie frowned; she hated the idea of this trammeled freedom. If she could have had her way she would have packed a bag and gone off on a solitary tour round the world.

But it had been her father's wish that she should take her place in society, and out of respect for his wish alone, she had at length agreed.

"Who is she, anyway?" she asked with veiled impatience. "I may as well know her name if I am to see her."

Mr. Geddes fixed his glasses more firmly on his nose, and took up the letter he had selected from the bundle he had brought. He scanned the pages, turning finally to the last.

"Her name," he said with pleased inflection, "is Mrs. Philip Buchanan."

"Go ahead, Connie," he urged, "show 'em you're game"

Love's Marathon

Dance, dance, keep moving! Five weeks of torment, yet for love's sake she must win the prize

By NANCY K. BETTS and VESTA WILLS HANCOCK

CONNIE KIRKWOOD smiled gallantly at her aunt, and her aunt's terrible friend, Mrs. Whitley. But Connie's hand, tanned, strong and sensitive, trembled as she took the fragrant cup of tea which Mrs. Rand poured from the silver tea-urn of those staunch early Kirkwoods.

"And how are the great unemployed, to-day?" she chaffed gayly.

"Still unemployed." Connie hoped her tone was casual.

"There was some sort of advertisement in the morning's paper. Connie rushed off, reeking with enthusiasm," Laura Rand told Helen Whitley. "What happened, baby?"

"They wouldn't believe that I was eighteen. So I came back for my birth certificate. Where do people keep birth certificates? Not that it would do any good. The places are always filled the first hour."

Delighted laughter from both ladies.

"The child has all the modern ideas

about independence and that sort of thing. But she finds it dreadfully difficult to become self-supporting. She says a trade school or a business college would have been so much more helpful than Miss Thompson's brand of education."

Connie's red lips clamped tightly on an indignant protest. It was like trying to beat back the fog, attempting to show Aunt Laura the folly of those terrifying debts piled up that one might mention, "now when Connie was at Miss Thompson's."

Mrs. Rand went on with the story, which became better with every telling. "The child is so serious since she's eighteen. To have a job would be truly grown-up. That's it, isn't it, Connie?"

"Not exactly." Connie decided on frankness. Miss Whitley no doubt knew the details of their finances better than Aunt Laura herself. "I can't forget that you borrowed money to send me to school—that all you have is the allowance from Uncle Jim. And it hurts," Connie made a little unconscious gesture toward her breast, "never to get any nearer to taking care of myself."

"Precious, there will always be some one to look after you."

"But how can I ever get anywhere playing around? Parties aren't a career!"

"I have the very thing for you, Constance," Helen Whitley purred in that smooth voice of hers which pushed a rapier point into the most innocent of conversations. "Over in Santa Monica they're holding one of those funny dancing marathons. There's a fifteen hundred dollar prize for the winners."

Connie was very still. She didn't hear what they said after that. She didn't taste her tea. Her eyes grew bright; her mouth smiled. Ordinarily she had the wide, white-toothed smile of a boy. But this was one of those private smiles that deepen the eyes. There was a kind of desperate bravery in it.

She put the cup down with finality. "It's an excellent idea, Mrs. Whitley. I believe I shall enter the marathon."

Laughter again. Laughter which ceased abruptly as Connie protested her earnestness. Mrs. Rand's voice rose sharply, and trembled with exasperation.

Connie felt herself thrusting desperately at the always-present smothering veils. Veils of convention, of genuine love, of utter inability to understand. If she could only clear them away Aunt Laura must see that a silken mesh of debts bound one fast and tight as ropes of steel.

Helen Whitley was highly amused.

"Nonsense, Laura. What if the newspapers do get hold of it? A little publicity hurts no one these days. You can't give Connie a ten thousand dollar ball or a Sikorsky amphibian. Every débutante needs press-agenting."

Constance groaned. It wasn't any use trying to make them understand. Had they ever understood anything about her?

THREE days later Connie, a little subdued with the cost of her victory, sailed triumphantly through the physical examination preliminary to the marathon.

"Tanned right down to the toes," the doctor said. "They are good toes, and you'll need good ones," he hesitated, added, "my dear."

"Then I'm all right?"

"Perfect. That is—physically. But do you know what you are getting into?

It will be easier to stop now than afterwards. Because, of course, you'll quit."

Angry tears filled the gold-brown eyes. "I will not quit."

He looked at her more shrewdly. "Perhaps not. But you'll miss the sun. There'll be not only days, but weeks, in that tent."

"Who wants the sun when so many candles are burning at both ends?" Her eyes danced with excitement. This was going to be *good!*

The doctor studied her daintiness, her untried youth. "How do you happen to be doing this?"

"Well," Connie started, and stopped. You couldn't explain about those silken meshes that held you fast as ropes of steel, about that passionate desire to be on your own.

Her love of dancing?

"Well," she picked at her chiffon stocking, drew it carefully over her toes and fell back into the inarticulation of her generation, "I'll get an unholy kick out of it."

"Do you realize that you will be in the arms of the man who is your partner for weeks on end?"

A slow flush crept up to the roots of Connie's short brown curls. "Is it so very different from every night at a dance?"

"Hmm." The doctor was noncommittal. "Which one of these chaps is your partner?"

A shadow fell on her face. "Must I find my own?" At this late hour, whom could she ask? All the boys would laugh at her.

The doctor shook his head pityingly before he pushed through the waiting group and touched a man standing apart. Connie had a glimpse of a long, bronzed profile, powerful as an Indian's, of a well-tailored suit, a little shabby.

The man protested; he turned to look at her, and she saw eyes which were desperately unhappy. The doctor argued. At last the dark head nodded, and the two turned and made their way back.

Connie was still flushing miserably when her future partner came to her. But she smiled up at Allan Vaughn, and felt the flush deepen as she received no smile in return.

A grinning boy hung a placard around her neck. She was no longer Constance Kirkwood, but half of Couple Seventeen.

Allan Vaughn led the way into the tent. It was a curious shade of gray with the haze of smoke. It echoed with the shouts of the announcer, the rattle of a tin pan piano, and the laughing comments of the spectators. Frying hamburger, onions, pickles, popcorn, and hot dogs mingled with the odor of tobacco.

Couple Seventeen was called. Connie Kirkwood and Allan Vaughn had to stand out from the rest, and let the eyes look at them; the voices cheer them; the hands clap a little. Connie smiled at the eyes and the voices and the hands with that engaging smile of hers. But Allan Vaughn eyed them disdainfully.

There were many speeches. The crowd grew restive, but the dull voices droned on. The music became louder. The placarded couples were pushed into marching formation. Around and around the tent they walked. The girl in front of Connie had a hole in the elbow of her dress. Her heels were run over and scuffed. But her partner was smiling down at her as if she were the sweetest thing in the world.

Connie's partner didn't speak, or smile, or touch her. He just stared straight ahead, lips tight, jaws set.

Then—the long, sharp whistle of the siren. The marathon had commenced.

BEFORE Connie had gone once around the crowded floor she knew she was starting with a handicap. She couldn't dance lightheartedly and follow the listless dragging feet of her partner. She wanted to tell him to put a little pep in it, but the haunted eyes fixed on the moths beating their dusty wings against the arc lights stopped her.

One, two. One, two. Every step was taking her away from being Aunt Laura's pretty little niece, and bringing her closer to being a personage in her own right.

"Isn't this thrilling?"

He barely answered.

People bumped into them; she laughed. It was fun to be one of these friendly folks. She spoke to her partner again, "Were you ever in one of these before?"

"I've watched my circuses from the reserved seats. I've thrown the peanuts until now."

She regretted the question. It had been a stupid thing to say to a man with eyes like that.

A quarter rolled at their feet.

"The Romans have picked you for a favorite Christian martyr. They're throwing the money to you. Aren't you going to pick it up?" he asked. "Well, I am."

Time to rest already? Who wanted to rest? But Connie followed the other contestants to the dressing room.

A half dozen girls lay down, closing their eyes, others sat on the edge of their army cots, laughing and smoking.

"If you will follow the example of the professionals you'll stay in the contest longer," the nurse told them. "Make the most of every chance to relax. Tumble down, girls. The blankets may be ugly, but they're clean."

The rough army blanket scratched Connie's chin and throat, but it helped her to realize that she was a soldier out to win her first battle. She wriggled uncomfortably when the attendant changed the little white cotton socks furnished by the management. The smell of alcohol on her feet was strong and unpleasant. Would they do this when she really wanted to sleep?

On the floor again Connie's partner took her in his arms with hardly a sign that he saw her.

"You'll have to tell me something," she said. "You didn't act much pleased when the doctor selected me for your partner. Why?"

"You want to know? Really? Well, I thought it was just one more raw deal of fate. I was about to ask for that henna-haired amazon over there. Instead I draw a nice little girl who will drop out when she's tired."

Connie smiled up at him; she had the friendliness of a puppy which has never been kicked. "But I won't do that. You can count on it. Winning this marathon means more than anything in the world to me."

She was sorry he was not curious enough to ask why. His uninspired steps plodded on. He spoke and his voice had the same kind of dullness as his eyes.

"It's merely a question of the way your body adjusts itself. Some can get used to it, and some can't. But you're young and strong. Swimming and horseback riding, I suppose. A society girl out for one more thrill."

"I'm young and strong, all right, and independent, too. I'll let the rest pass. But what are you out for?"

"To eat, my friend, to eat. You're sure of that six times a day. A cot, for

twelve minutes out of every hour. A dime and a quarter now and then from generous humanity. The glitter of the prize money. Fifteen hundred dollars. Princely sum for ruining your physique."

"The others don't seem to be worrying."

Connie's eyes were watching with interested friendliness the placarded, jostling couples. She told herself she was proud to be one of them. For as long as she could remember she had wanted to get away from women like Mrs. Whitley, idle ladies with sharp tongues, and glittering ladies like the aunt who would make a toy of her.

One, two. One, two. Dancing was like rainbow lights, like an arch to reach from the present into the bright and shinng future. Maybe she'd get tired sometime. Not for a long time, though. So silly to stop every forty-eight minutes.

There was something to tell Allan. She'd do it now before she looked at his face. She'd look at his hand, with the cluster of dark freckles on its tan, and the well-kept nails.

"I can understand your being in the marathon. I tried to find a job myself—and I couldn't."

His hand seemed to shudder, ever so little.

"Good of you to think about it," he said in the way which meant, "Sympathy unasked and not wanted."

BEFORE the end of the second day Connie had learned to sleep so soundly that she didn't know when her feet were bathed. It took the long siren wail of the fire whistle to bring her to her feet, and call back consciousness so that she could stumble onto the floor. Already there were blue smudges under her eyes, but her healthy pliant body was yielding to the new régime.

"You're one that'll get used to it, dearie. And you've got curly hair like mine. That helps," a little professional assured her. "The first five days are the hardest. If you get through them you'll find it easier then up to the end. But you'll see couples dropping out like flies this week."

Connie was glad her hair needed little attention, for, unlike the others, she took time from her rest periods for sponge baths. As the dancers all slept in their clothing Connie's body was grateful for those few moments.

Henry, her aunt's chauffeur, amazed her by bringing a gallon of chilled orange juice every morning. After the third day he returned at night with a thermos jug of hot chocolate. Connie shared it with the others.

"I suspect a healthy curiosity mixed with altruism," Vaughn said. But after Henry had come for four nights Allan stopped saying such things.

"My slippers, Henry," Connie requested the first night the chauffeur came. "I want everything without a heel, sandals, bath slippers, bedroom slippers."

At eleven he was back with a hatbox full of footwear.

"I didn't mean to-night. You must be all tired out."

"Me! Tired out!" He looked at her soberly. "It's you that looks as if you was going to drop, miss." He went off, shaking his head,

"Some attentive sweetie you have," a little red-haired German girl said, slipping her swollen feet into one of Connie's satin mules. "It's a wonder his boss lets him out every night to see you."

(Wouldn't Henry be shocked to hear that!)

At three in the morning of the fourth day a box filled with shining handcuffs and little dog chains was brought out.

"You girls wear the cuffs when you're sleepy. Being chained to your partner's belt keeps you from falling. Don't want any broken bones. And see you don't take all the rides. When the boys wear cuffs twist the loose chain about your wrist."

Allan Vaughn dropped the bracelet and chain in his pocket. 'We'll go around under our own power."

Connie looked at the little professional who was walking around the floor, eyes closed and body relaxed. But "strong and independent" she had boasted, and strong and independent she would be.

SOME one said it was the fifth day. Five days. Ridiculous. They'd been dancing always. Their steps put on end would reach as far as the moon. But there wasn't anything at the moon after you got there.

With half of the couples gone there was more room. Connie and Allan weren't jostled any longer. Connie was thankful for the duller beat of the rhythm. Waltzes were nice, like a mother crooning.

Yet there were four couples who appeared to be enjoying themselves, making little jokes with their partners, always ready to give an exhibition dance. These were the professionals.

In the evening Connie stiffened in Vaughn's arms. He followed her gaze to a party entering one of the boxes. The women wore evening dress with brocaded wraps, the young men had boutonnières in their lapels.

"Your people?"

"We'll have to go over there." It took her a little while to think it out, and then to say it so that it made sense. Allan and Connie shuffled back and forth in front of the box as the laughing party put newspapers on the camp chairs before they sat down.

"Darling," said Laura Rand, "you look ghastly. I've never seen such circles under any one's eyes."

Connie tried to smile; she tried to think of something to say. Her feet knew what they ought to do; they kept moving. But she couldn't think exactly.

"Are you all right, Connie? I've been so worried. I couldn't come a moment before, haven't even had time for a manicure. But to-night I gathered up a few of your friends—" There was a frightened bravado in Laura Rand's forced enthusiasm.

Her aunt was trying to be a good sport about something—what was it? The dancing? Connie wasn't sure, but she loved her aunt; she would have liked to put her aching head on those wide friendly shoulders. But you never stopped dancing until the bell rang.

Allan was saying something. "You have to answer, Connie."

That jerked her back. It gave the push to make her tongue move. "I'm so glad you came. How clean you look—I mean how nice and smooth you look—"

"Come home, Connie." Aunt Laura's eyes were frightened and big.

Home. That meant bed. Maybe James would carry her up the wide stairs. But her feet must not stop moving. Besides, there was something she had to get—

Allan answered for her. "Constance is a little tired now. After she's slept she will feel better. She doesn't want to go home until she has the prize money."

The rest bell rang.

Connie wakened with her mind

clearer. Again they were in front of Mrs. Rand's box, and she could see everyone there. Girls she had known at school—Sally Richards, who always laughed up her sleeve at Connie, Gerry Black who never noticed her at all.

Sally said, "Imagine one of our crowd getting away with this."

What tiny feet Sally had. What pretty, pretty shoes, and beautiful thin stockings. Connie didn't dare look at her own feet. Poor feet that couldn't stand still unless the bell rang.

Gerry said, "you beat us all to fame, Connie. Some people get all the breaks. We've told a reporter to come and interview you."

Why did the girls talk? They were adding that much more sound. They should know they couldn't drown out the screeching violin.

"How in the world do you stand these terrible people, Connie?" Laura Rand asked. At this the last spark of Connie's vitality was roused.

"I like them a lot," she said simply. "See that big black haired boy? He's a professional, called Cheerio, and he helps us all wonderfully. And there's a little couple in the corner—"

Before them all he sank on the cot beside her and took her hands in his

"The girl who is wearing your new printed georgette—"

"'It was the only one that would fit her. They'd just been married, and they didn't have a dollar. It's so nice the way he takes care of her. She sleeps on his shoulder and he looks at her all the time—"

"Hey, you, Couple Seventeen," a

voice called, "keep moving or you'll be disqualified."

A FOURTH young man joined the box party, caught sight of Connie's partner, and rushed forward.

"Allan Vaughn, as I live! Connie, if you could rope him into this, I take my hat off to you."

One, two. One, two. Allan seemed to hang on to her as he answered in the lightest of tones, "she didn't. I entered this squirrel cage on my own."

"Sounds rational! With all that Wall Street money?"

"Lost in the smash," Allan answered.

"Did you? Sorry. Must be you're after local color for another show. I'll never forget the hit your Junior Opera made at Stanford."

Allan was dancing her away. In a warmer voice than she had ever heard from him, he said, "the big chump!"

"But have you really written music and plays?"

"I was going to write them. When I had earned the fortune."

"How—how awful!"

The tweed covered arm drew her a little nearer. As she closed her eyes in sleep she always saw it. The little blue and red threads. And the thin, nervous fingers.

The retiring bell rang.

When they were back in front of the box, the party was ready to leave. The program of second rate vaudeville acts was over and the couples took turns with songs and dances of their own while the other contestants shuffled back and forth.

The bride and groom gravely executed a pitiful imitation of the Shanghai. Money was thrown to them. Connie stooped to help gather it up.

"How amusing," Mrs. Whitley said, "like monkeys picking up the organ grinder's pennies. I'll get you a cap and a red jacket, Connie."

"Anything is better than those horrible placards numbering her like a convict," Laura Rand added bitterly.

Allan Vaughn's arms seemed to be tighter around Connie.

"Aren't you two going to put on a number before we go?" asked the boy who had recognized Allan.

"Yes, Connie, do." The girls laughed like animated dolls.

"We'll show them something," Allan muttered, and he swung Connie briskly toward the musicians.

The orchestra struck up a number with enthusiasm, and to Connie's astonishment, she found herself led smoothly and efficiently through a series of intricate, catchy steps.

"Can you sing, Connie?" Allan demanded.

"Not before—them."

"Yes, you can. Listen to this." He bent his dark head so that his lips were close to her ear, and without missing a step, through the tinny drumming of the dance number, sang over and over a little tune.

"Oh, it's great to be young,
And it's great to be gay.
There's nothing like laughter
To brighten the way.

"No matter how tired,
No matter how blue,
Together we'll manage
To laugh our way through.

"Youth is so precious
Because it won't stay,
We'll spend ours in dancing,
For this is our day."

"I think I can sing that," said Connie, "because I love it!"

Allan borrowed the violin. He was carefully tuning it even while they

moved around the floor. The song was singing out of the strings, singing straight at Connie's heart.

She felt her voice carried naturally and simply on the sustaining wings of the melody.

The spectators liked it. They clapped and yelled for it to be repeated. Half dollars and dollars rolled on the dance floor at their feet.

"Our surprising Connie," Mrs. Whitley murmured, when Constance and Allan were shuffling again in front of the box. "I'll have to bring my Hollywood friends to see you. Laura Rand, you'll have a talkie star on your hands yet."

SOMETIME before dawn Allan drew from his pocket the handcuff and chain.

"Let me snap this on your wrist, and you try to rest a little on the floor as the other girls do."

"It wouldn't be keeping up my end."

"You more than keep up your end by being you. It puts heart in a chap to be your partner."

He snapped the bracelet on her wrist with a smile which was like the raising of a curtain to let the light flood into a darkened room.

CONNIE and Allan had passed safely through the first week. Three-fourths of the contestants had been forced to drop out, but those who remained had made the bodily adjustments which would carry them on to the final test.

The dance rhythm now was like the beating of Connie's pulses, unconscious. There was a dull comfort in going from her cot into Allan's arms. Contestants came either to love or hate their partners, the men said. Love? Who had time to think about love? Still Allan's tweed coat sleeves were good to have around her.

The freckles were gone from his hands now. The skin had grown up on the little half moons of his nails. But Allan's lips had lost their bitter curve.

Outside the tent the wind blew cool and pure off the mountains. Outside somewhere the sea murmured. Ships rode against the far horizon. One, two. One, two. But you danced forever, rested for a flash, and danced forever again.

Constance couldn't imagine her feet ever being quiet. All the steps that every one of them had taken would reach up to the sun and back again. Maybe when it was over she couldn't stop. It would be like St. Vitus dance, the muscles going on and on, even after you told them to stop. Like disobedient children. She might be in church, and her legs would start dancing. One, two. One, two.

As the weeks wore on the marathon attracted less public attention. To offset this, the management had certain days on which the cots of both men and girls were placed on the dance floor in full view of the public.

Connie thought of her little bed at home, its sheets smelling of lavender. The wide pink ribbons on the deep white blankets.

The air blowing through white muslin curtains was sometimes scented with violets. What sort of odor was that? She couldn't remember. She couldn't imagine any smell but that of food and smoke and breathed-up air.

It was the fifth week now. In the cot next to Connie lay the little bride, her face wasted down to a queer blueness. The daylight had dimmed the big bulbs when she opened her eyes and cried out, "I can't see anything."

They pulled her to her feet, and she was in her husband's arms. He was dragging her around the floor. The frail woman swayed uncertainly. Her lips were so blue that lip-stick made them purple.

At noon she was attacked by violent cramps. She couldn't stand straight. And yet, with the help of Allan, and Constance, and Cheerio, the husband kept moving her around the floor. There were little beads of pain above his lips.

The piano droned on. The men at the food stands fried their hot dogs and hamburgers. The people threw a little money.

"Aren't they ever going to send for the doctor?" Connie asked Allan.

"Not till his regular trip. He'd take her off, and there'd be another attraction gone."

At last the doctor came and ordered the woman off the floor.

No one had any heart for anything after that. The married couple had been broke. They were still broke, and it looked as if she might be seriously ill. "Not responsible for accident, injury or illness developed in the course of this contest." That phrase in the contract they had signed was in the fore of the contestants' thoughts.

"Poor devils," Allan said. "They needed the money more than any of us."

The gloom reached out even to the audience. There was almost a look of shame upon the faces.

"They're wondering how it will catch us," Allan muttered.

"But we'll stick." Connie tried to smile. The muscles of her mouth moved as if an elastic were jerking them and they snapped back as soon as she forgot to pull on the strings.

Allan's face was gray and haggard, and his eyes, red-rimmed, were sunken like those of an old man.

"You have on more rouge tonight, Constance."

"No woman would ever enter a marathon if she couldn't have it."

"Your face is like a little wilting flower. Put your head on my shoulder again."

They danced in silence. Allan's head was down, close to her own. His lips were close to her ear.

"Connie, are you awake?"

"I'm listening."

"Connie, you'd better stop. You'll break down. No girl can stand it. I don't want to win at the price of hurting you."

"The doctor says I am holding up as well as any one."

"You'd have to be practically dead before he'd haul you off."

"I can take care of myself. I have to prove I'm not a toy, but a real girl."

"You're a very real girl, Connie. But even real girls need some one to look after them."

His voice was so earnest, so full of meaning that Connie's heart skipped a beat.

AT that moment one of the girl professionals gave a sharp cry and crumpled onto the floor. Her partner, taken unaware, was thrown from his balance and fell with a crash. Gasps rose from all over the tent.

The nurse ran onto the floor and unclasped the handcuff; two attendants carried the unconscious girl to the dressing room; her partner plodded from the floor, tears streaming down his cheeks.

Connie found herself sobbing softly against Allan's shoulder, and Allan's hand was soothing her.

"Strike up a lively tune, there,"

called an official. "One of you kids put on a number. The crowd's getting bored."

No one volunteered. Sullen, resentful faces stared at the managers. From a friendly group the audience on the benches seemed to have changed to a gloating, chop-licking beast impatient for another victim to furnish a thrill.

A bustle. Gay laughing voices. Well dressed people entering a box.

Mrs. Whitley's mocking silken voice was cooing out to Constance. It sounded far off and blurred.

"I've brought my friends from Hollywood to hear your numbers. Sing your prettiest, Connie."

"Snap into it, kid," the manager was saying. "This is your big chance."

"Sure you can, Connie?" Allan asked.

"I—I can't." Her trembling lips barely formed the words.

The official caught hold of Connie's shoulder to urge her; Allan shook the hand off angrily. "Keep out of this, please. Connie, listen. That woman expects you to fall down. It will give her something more to laugh at."

Tears of complete exhaustion filled Connie's eyes. "I don't care." Her round little chin quivered like that of a baby.

"Connie, you've been the brightest thing in this marathon. You've seen all that's courageous and fine in it. God knows, even with your vision, it is hard enough to see. Find something gay just once more."

"I can never sing again."

"Connie, look at me. Do it for me."

She raised her eyes, dropped them quickly again. Her heart commenced to feel warm, to sing. Her head came up; a flush spread through the rouged cheeks; light flamed back in her eyes.

"What do you want me to sing?"

"Something new. Something that came to me to-day. The song of the marathon and all we've gone through."

He hummed over his new song, and this other Connie, who had been away so long, listened eagerly. She stepped before the mirror to powder her face while Allan tuned the cheap violin, running over the air. All the time their feet shuffled back and forth. "Now."

She stepped forward, lifted the round brave chin high in the air and, bright eyes fixed on the spirals of tobacco smoke eddying about the top of the tent, yet seeing nothing of it, she sang Allan's "Song of the Marathon."

Her weariness left its impress in her voice, adding enormously to its pathos, but it was also charged with a high determination and an unyielding courage which caught at the heartstrings.

"Life is just a marathon.
All the time we wander on,
Through days of laughter, nights of pain,
Knowing the sun will shine again.

"The will to win, the will to do,
Will hold us up and see us through.
When body fails our soul keeps on
And thus we win our marathon."

There was, when she had finished, that precious second of breathless silence before the house rocked with applause. Connie had to sing the song again and again before the audience would let her voice die out. After the next rest period other couples crowded around Allan to learn the song. Other heads went up; other feet moved more easily. The song belonged to them all.

BUT when Constance stumbled out at three o'clock in the gray fog of early morning there was such great pity in the eyes of the boys walk-

ing on either side of Allan Vaughn that she came wide awake, shivering.

"He's fast asleep," said Cheerio. "Here, I'll put the handcuffs on him and we'll walk around with you to try and waken him."

Though Cheerio shook him, slapped his cheeks, and shouted in his ear, Allan did not waken during that hour. His arms hung limply over Constance's shoulder; his knees sagged like those of a baby. But he kept to his feet.

The next hour the boys rolled up Allan's trousers, hit him on the knee-cap. They gave him quick raps on the end of the nose. Allan jerked his head away as though flies were annoying him. His sleep was growing deeper.

He was utterly unconscious of the fire siren which signalled them to the floor. The other contestants moved him about like a Robot. His knees grew more and more limp. It was harder for Connie to keep him erect.

The third hour of Allan's unconsciousness began. He took three steps with Constance, and, despite the fact that she tugged at him with all her might, started sinking slowly to the floor.

"If he falls flat and can't be roused we will have to count him out," the official told her.

"Turn your head," Cheerio said. Shuddering, Constance did so. She had seen thumbs pressed into another boy's eyeballs in a last effort to rally him. But Allan did not rouse. He had slipped down on his knees now. His whole body was relaxed.

Connie also knelt, her shoulder under Allan's, still desperately striving to keep him from lying prone.

"It's all my fault," she thought. "I let him carry me around too much. And he wore himself out teaching us the marathon song."

The nurse came running with two bottles of smelling salts. Cheerio broke the bottles against the edge of the railing, and thrust the contents in Allan's face.

Connie and Cheerio coughed and choked.

Allan's shoulders heaved. He gasped for breath. At last Cheerio could lift him to his feet. The other couples standing close to Allan began to sing loudly, stamping their feet in time.

"When body fails," Connie sang in a breaking ghost of a voice, "our soul keeps on."

"What—huh—er," Allan was commencing to waken.

"Quick. Walk him about fast," Cheerio urged. From a walk he broke into a dog trot.

When Allan was able to go around the floor with Constance alone he was shaking with a nervous chill.

"I nearly failed you."

"But you came through," Connie said, her face flooded with the new light shining within her.

CROWDS filled the tent as early as ten o'clock the next morning. At any time now more contestants might drop out. At any time the marathon might end.

The couples were dancing slowly, wearily, shoulders drooping, eyes staring, unseeing.

The manager touched Allan on the shoulder. "Two guys want to talk to Couple Seventeen."

"Do you remember my coming here the other night with Mrs. Whitley?" asked the man with very smooth black hair.

"Yes, indeed," Connie prevaricated politely, half-noticing him, wondering whether one extra interview would be too much for Allan.

" Mr. Vaughn, you know my friend, Bill Burns, don't you?"

Allan grinned. " Oh, yes, his other name is Santy Claus."

Constance looked puzzled.

" Have you kept track of the publicity, Miss Kirkwood?"

She shook her head.

" Some of it wasn't so hot. But it's all publicity. I've got a proposition. If you win this contest I'll give you a contract to appear in one of those talkie shorts as a tryout. Show me there that you can put it over and I'll have more interesting things to offer."

" You mean—a chance to go into the movies, a position waiting for me?" Connie had forgotten about weariness; the steps of the fox trot were gay again.

" Most girls would call it a career."

" Can't you use us both?"

The black-haired man shook his head.

" Don't bother about me," Allan interposed. "I'll get along all right. You'll go a long way in the pictures, Connie."

" Maybe I can help you get started, Allan."

" You think about getting yourself started, Connie."

The black-haired man cleared his throat. " You realize that this offer depends on your winning?"

" We will."

Connie signed her name with a flourish.

Bill Burns, whose other name was Santy Claus, looked down his long nose and spoke to Allan. " Then you're going on with this—er—monkey race?"

" Until we win!" Allan's eyes were alert now, challenging.

The slick-haired one punched Bill Burns in the ribs and chortled, " I told you so."

Bill Burns shrugged his sharp shoulders, looked cynically at Constance. " It takes these baby-faced dolls to drive a man plumb loco."

Connie looked from one face to another. Something was being kept from her. They were twitting Allan about something he had done. Suddenly she was seething with anger that any one should tease an Allan whose face was so haggard, so tired, so gallant.

" What were they talking about, Allan?" she asked as they left the floor.

" Just wisecracking, honey. Didn't mean a thing."

THE little bride who had dropped from the contest was sitting on the edge of Connie's cot, waiting for her.

" I know it's against the rules, but gee, I had to say good-by to you."

" Good-by? Where are you going?"

" To Taft. My husband has a job promised him there. Allan Vaughn lent us the money to go."

Constance looked with bewildered eyes at the woman.

" He sure was a prince to do it. Some movie fellow bought that song ' This Is My Day.' We hated to take the money, but Allan said he'd been more than half promised a hurry-up job on a musical picture, and if he didn't get that he had a chance at the prize money."

Connie stared straight before her. " I suppose Allan gave you every cent he had," she said slowly, wonderingly.

" I shouldn't have told you," the little bride was contrite. " Now you'll be worrying about him dropping out of the marathon after it's too late for you to get a new partner."

It came clear to Connie then. The pieces fitted together. Bill Burns, " whose other name is Santy Claus,"

had offered Allan a chance to do the musical score of a rush picture. "It takes these baby-faced dolls to drive a man plumb loco," said the slick-haired man, chortling, "I told you so!"

Allan had thrown away his big chance so that Connie might have her opportunity in pictures, her little try-out job. In case they won the marathon! Allan was giving her a gamble for fame at the cost of a start on his own career!

Connie sprang out of bed, ran barefooted across the rough plank dancing floor to the box where the two men from the studios were looking over a scrapbook of publicity stories.

"Did Allan Vaughn refuse an offer of yours to work on a musical comedy?"

"Yeah. The big chump! Thought Hollywood producers would wait for a small time endurance contest to end."

"But it's not too late for him to change his mind! If he stopped right now, he could get the work, couldn't he?"

"What's it to you?" Bill Burns's eyes had narrowed.

Connie met his gaze squarely. "Quite a lot," she said.

"That is good," said Bill Burns looking at the black-haired man. "Well, little one, if you must know, it is not too late for Allan Vaughn to get the job."

Connie managed a smile, and turning to the official, said, with that brave directness of hers, "I'm through."

"You little fool," Bill's friend spoke up. "You don't get the contract unless you are one of the winners."

Connie shut her eyes. Back to Aunt Laura and a silken mesh of debts. Her chance to be free. It might never come again!

"I'm through," she repeated.

But before she walked off, head high, shoulders squared, she threw back at them once more that gallant schoolgirl smile.

ALLAN VAUGHN pushed his way into the girls' retiring room where Connie sat on the edge of a cot, watching the nurse pack her bag. She looked like a little girl whose bright balloon has just slipped away.

"What does this mean?" Allan's face was working. His haggard features had light shining through them.

"What could it mean? Do you suppose I'd let you lose your big opportunity to get started again, just on my account? Surely you never thought that, Allan!"

Before them all he sank on the cot beside her, took her hands in his and held them close.

"Connie, you are the dearest thing in the world. Before I knew you I couldn't find anything decent anywhere. Now—everything has a shine to it."

Her hands moved ever so little, and he held them still closer, still tighter.

"I didn't care about the old marathon—much!" She tried hard, but she couldn't say it without a little gulp at the end.

The siren shrieked at them. The tinpanny piano took up its rhythm. One, two. One, two. The marathon was going on without them.

"Connie, could you love me—a sour old writer of songs—a little? If you'd love all of me as much as I love your little finger it would be enough."

Connie put her arms about his neck. She kissed him into silence. Suddenly she broke into a delighted chuckle:

"Won't my Aunt Laura be happy, won't she be proud, when she sees the prize I've won at the marathon!"

"C'mon, Jimmy," Mabel urged. Gertrude dared not look. Would he go?

Too Slow for Fast Company

Love-filled eyes lifted in surrender gazed numbly upon a telltale message written in scarlet lipstick!

By C. M. WAITE

GERTRUDE NEWELSON dropped the paint brush from her cramped fingers and let her sober brown eyes range over the table.

It was stacked with greeting cards for Easter, still five months away, and the gay little chickens and rabbits and birds helped divert her thoughts from the November gale rattling the tenement windows, and the snow swirling in from Boston harbor. Those cards of her own designing, brought to her day dreams of clean, peaceful fields where there was no roar of traffic, and people were not eternally in a never-ending hurry.

Aunt Mary had told her niece much about the country. Since the patient old lady had become bedridden her greatest solace was in musing of her girlhood on a Connecticut farm. If only they could afford to move—

Br-r-r-r!

Gertrude's slight figure jumped as the telephone bell rasped on weary

nerves. She stepped across the plainly furnished sitting room.

"This is Louis Warner," a smooth voice said. "Mabel home yet?"

"No," Gertrude answered. "She won't be home till after seven. The store is keeping open late during this sale week."

"Well, give her a message, Gertie, will you? We were going to a show to-night, but I can't get away. I've fixed up another date for her, though. Fellow from Maine, James Farquhar, who does a lot of business with us. Good scout. He's here for a week and doesn't know anybody, so I told him I'd lend him Mabel for to-night. She won't care."

No, reflected Gertrude, her sister would not care, if only the man spent enough money on her.

"Farquhar will call about eight thirty."

When she had replaced the receiver Gertrude stood staring at it with a look as near to bitterness as her pale, sensitive face could manage. She couldn't really be bitter with any one, but at times it seemed unfair that it was always Mabel who was going out. Unfair because, deep in her heart, Gertrude realized that only her own dutiful devotion to Aunt Mary tied her so closely to home, while Mabel's very selfishness in this respect gave her the freedom to go where and when she desired.

MABEL came in panting. Her struggle with the storm would have put roses in her round, dimpled cheeks but for the rouge already there. She was an olive-skinned girl with pretty features, but she had let her soft lips fall into a pout and a glance of boldness sullied the charm of long-lashed black eyes.

She shook the snow from her raccoon coat, a present from Louis Warner who worked in a fur shop.

"Supper ready, Gertie? I haven't much time. Got a date with Louis."

"It's all ready. Sit down. But Louis can't come. He called up to tell you he's sending a substitute, a man they do business with. He didn't think you'd mind."

Mabel's eyes sparkled. "That adds a thrill! If only he's a good spender! I feel like stepping high and wide after decorating the back of that counter all day. What's his name?"

"James Farquhar."

"Sounds kind of tony."

They ate in silence a few minutes. Then Gertrude said: "The rent is due Friday. You'll have to help me pay it."

"Darnation! I'm sorry, sis, but I forgot the rent, and I spent my last cent except lunch money to-day. I simply had to have some new stockings."

Gertrude's thin cheeks flushed. "You could have mended your others. You don't need new ones half as much as I do."

"I can't wear old patched things out evenings! You don't have to worry—you never go out."

"How can I when you go out every night?"

"Why can't you?"

"And leave Aunt Mary alone?"

"Oh, she'd be all right."

"She can't get out of bed. Suppose there was a fire. Suppose—"

"Oh, suppose you forget her once in a while! It's perfectly idiotic to stick home just on her account. She may live twenty years. Are you—"

Gertrude shut her off with a quick, warning gesture.

The door to the invalid's room was shut but Mabel's voice was rising shrilly. Around this point the argu-

ment invariably ended. Mabel rose, muttering.

"Well, you can lose all your good times and die an old maid, if you want to. I shan't." And she flounced off.

Gertrude thoughtfully cleared the supper table, attended to Aunt Mary's needs, and then got out her paints. The unpaid bills were accumulating too fast up behind the clock. She'd have to forget her weariness and work on her cards.

And then came a rap on the door.

"See if that's my man," called Mabel. "I'll be ready in a minute."

Gertrude visioned the sheik who would be waiting. He would be like Louis, flashily-dressed, narrow-chested, with slick hair and city-sallowed skin. He would exude self-importance. He'd have a cigarette in his lips and he'd never dream of taking it out when he greeted her.

She fixed her eyes on the level where his would be, and opened the door.

"Good evening," a deep voice rumbled. "Is this Miss Mabel Newelson? I'm James Farquhar."

Gertrude found herself staring, not into a pair of vapid eyes, but at a brown necktie at a point about three inches below the collar. She gasped a little, and her glance swept up past shoulders that bulked over her till she felt as tiny as a mouse. She saw a wide, humorous mouth, blue eyes that twinkled and curly, reddish hair that no pomade could have flattened. And seldom had she seen such ruddy skin.

"Have I got the wrong place?" he was asking. "I'm sorry if—"

"I beg your pardon!" exclaimed Gertrude. "I'm afraid I'm rude. Come in . . . You'd better take off your coat while you're waiting."

"Thank you." He shrugged off the heavy buffalo skin garment, eying her quizzically. "I hope I'm not a nuisance. I happened to remark to Louis Warner that it was tiresome hanging around the hotel and he said he knew a nice girl who might take pity and go to a show and dance with me. I must say," he smiled, "that I'm pleased with his choice. Do you think you can put up with me for a few hours?"

"I—I know I could!" On the instant Gertrude blushed confusedly. How had such words slipped past her lips? She hastened to add, "but I'm Gertrude Newelson. Mabel's my sister. She'll be ready in a minute."

"Oh!"

Was Gertrude mistaken, or was there a trace of disappointment in his tone? She glanced at him covertly, and caught him staring at her, a puzzled little line between his eyes.

At that moment Mabel came in.

"Oh, you're Jimmy Farquhar! Sorry to keep you waiting."

"Don't mention it. Your sister was entertaining me."

"She was? I'm surprised. Gertie doesn't usually like to entertain my boy friends. Where are we going, Mr. Man?"

"Where would you like to go?"

"Well, there's a good show at Keith's."

"Suits me."

At the door he bowed to Gertrude. "Perhaps I—probably I'll see you again, Miss Newelson."

She noticed his substitution of words, and for no reason at all her heart jumped a little. "I—that would be very nice, Mr. Farquhar."

He turned to Mabel, who laughed up at him. "I feel like a shrimp 'side of you. Well, c'mon, big boy."

Forgotten was the weariness with which Gertrude had started her eve-

ning's work. Her brush touched deftly on the cards and painted colorful little birds that seemed bursting with song. She giggled like a schoolgirl at remembrance of that first intense gaze she had fastened on James Farquhar's necktie. She thought of his smiling mouth and twinkling eyes. But mostly she recalled his parting words. "I'll probably see you again." She wondered if—yes, she really hoped—that he wanted to see her again.

IN the morning Mabel, as usual, did not get up till Gertrude had breakfast nearly ready. She was cross and glum. Ordinarily she liked to prattle of her evening's entertainment but to-day she refused to heed the hints that Gertrude slyly advanced.

Toward the end of the meal there was an interruption. Louis Warner knocked and entered, easy-mannered and assertive.

"Howdy, folks. I was hoping I'd catch you before you left, Mabel. How'd it go last night with Farquhar?"

"Punk!"

"Really? That's too bad. I was planning a party for him for to-night."

"Well, don't expect me to go with him."

"What's the matter with him? Stingy?"

"Oh, he dug into his pocket all right. Any man that takes me out has to! But he's only a backwoods hick! Slow and clumsy as a bear. Why didn't you tell me he was a farmer?"

"Why, I didn't think—"

"You said it! Eee-magine—he was all ready to come home at midnight, when every interesting place in town was just getting open."

Louis Warner looked worried. "Listen, Mabel, if I can swing Farquhar's business our way it will be a big boost for me with the boss. I want to give him a good time and it's only for a few days. Now to-night there'd be us three and some other girl and—"

"That's O. K.," interrupted Mabel, "provided the other girl is his partner."

"But he's met you, and there's no other girl in Boston he knows."

Mabel shrugged indifferently. "He met Gertrude last night, so that's one more he knows."

Louis turned a skeptical glance at Gertrude and coughed disparagingly. "Well, ah—as I understand it, Gertie never goes out evenings. Of course if she felt she could come—er—I'd be glad—"

It was perfectly obvious to Gertrude that he would not be glad. Only the demand of courtesy, as a result of Mabel's remark, had forced him to extend this half invitation. She knew she was expected to refuse, and opened her lips to do so. She was as amazed as the others to hear the words she did utter.

"Why, thank you. If you don't think Mr. Farquhar would mind the substitution—"

Louis gulped, while Mabel wheeled in amazement.

"You'd really go? Well, somebody fan me! But what about Aunt Mary, as you always say to me?"

"I'll get Fannie Hatch to stay with her."

"Hooray! And as it's Louis's party he can fork over a dollar for Fannie. Say, you give me a thrill, sis. You can wear that blue dress of mine, and—"

"Thanks, I'd rather wear my own. And I'll take care of Fannie, too."

"Old stiff neck! Have it your own way. Well, I've got to toddle along. Did you say you were going to take me down in a taxi, Louis?"

"I didn't—but I expected to," re-

plied Louis grimly. "Well, all right then, Gertie. We'll call soon after eight." But there was no enthusiasm in the words.

THE day flew down on wings. Not a card was painted as, with an unprecedented orgy of attention to herself, Gertrude turned seamstress, and plied swift needles on coat and dress and hat. She had long needed new shoes, and now she was glad she had waited till this day before buying them.

Aunt Mary pressed upon her a beautiful cameo pin, one of the last of her treasured keepsakes. The old lady was as excited as her niece.

"And he's a farmer, eh? Then of course he'd be big and strong. He's workin' with his muscles, and breathin' clean air, and livin' regular."

"It must be wonderful," said Gertrude longingly. "All the birds and trees and flowers and brooks, and everything so clean and quiet and peaceful. Maybe we can move into the country some day. If I could only save a little money—"

In order to be ready on time Gertrude prepared her supper and Aunt Mary's before Mabel arrived home. Then she dressed while her sister was eating. She had remodeled an old but little worn dress of black crêpe satin. The sober color was relieved by a collar of exquisite écru lace that had lain in a drawer, unused, for years. Aunt Mary's cameo pin fastened it. Her hat was of green felt, snug-fitting and chic with its turned-down brim. Nobody would have guessed it was three years old. The coat, matching the green of her hat, had for collar a band of gray squirrel requisitioned for the evening from Aunt Mary's old cape.

When Gertrude reappeared in the dining room Mabel's eyes grew round.

"Well, for heaven's sake, sis, how'd you do it? I didn't know you could look so stunning!"

"I—do you think I'd better rouge a little? I haven't any color."

"Sure, put on a lot. If you're going to vamp that big farmer you'll want—wait, though!" She regarded Gertrude critically. "No, don't rouge, it would spoil that nice blush and I just bet Jimmy loves blushes."

Gertrude pretended to be busy with the dishes. "Why didn't you like him, Mabel? Was he rude?"

"Rude? Say, he was so nice he gave me a pain. He didn't even kiss me good night!"

"What was wrong, then?"

"Oh, he's all right, but he's only a farmer. Eee-magine—me wasting my time on a farmer!"

"Why, what's the matter with farmers?"

"The matter's with their pocketbooks. They're always poor. Aren't you always hearing about farm relief? That's the main objection I've got to Jimmy. I could overlook his other faults if he had the cash. But the man I tie up to has got to have a healthy bank roll.

She hurried off to change her clothes, while Gertrude thought. "Well, if I ever tie up to a man he needn't have a cent if he only loves me."

THE first part of the evening was like a fairy tale to her. The men came, Louis appearing insignificant beside the towering Farquhar. There was a hurried good-by to Aunt Mary, a short walk in the blustering cold, a taxi ride, and they were in a subdued theater.

Gertrude shared Farquhar's eager interest in the acts, while Louis and

Mabel shifted in their seats, blasé and restless.

And then another taxi, to a crowded dining hall where people ate and danced and ate again, and inviting music strummed on endlessly. Gertrude's eyes sparkled, and she hummed with unusual light-heartedness. While trying desperately to see everything in all this rapturous evening her glance strayed incessantly from the sights around her to rest proudly on her ever-solicitous escort.

Mabel observed, with a little derisive shrug, her sister's happiness and its very apparent cause. She herself was bored and discontented.

"That girl's got a swell silver fox scarf," she remarked enviously. "When are you going to get me one, Louis?"

"You can't wear silver fox with a coon coat," said Louis judiciously. "Anyway, do you know how much a good one costs?"

Mabel pouted. "You're in the business and can get 'em cheap."

Farquhar laughed. "Take a look at the one she likes, Louis. Maybe you could afford that."

Louis glanced over his shoulder at the woman three tables away. He chuckled with Farquhar. "Well, now, if that would satisfy you—"

"Very well," she said defiantly. "I'll tell you. It's because you're too fast for slow company!"

"What's the matter with it?" asked Mabel suspiciously.

As Louis grinned, Farquhar answered her. "It's a pointed fox, not a silver."

"Pointed? What's the difference?"

"It's only an imitation of a silver. A red fox dyed black and stuck, or 'pointed,' full of badger hairs."

"And it isn't worth as much?"

"Far from it. You'll pay from two hundred dollars up for a good silver fox. That pointed one probably cost about forty."

Mabel stared at him in surprise. Then with an odd little crinkle between her eyes, she asked Louis to dance. When they had gone Farquhar sighed imperceptibly and turned to Gertrude. "Would you like to dance, too?" he asked.

"I'd rather just sit and look," she confessed. "All this is so new to me that I just want to stare and listen and enjoy everything."

"That takes a load off my mind," he grinned happily. "I'm a terrible dancer, too big and clumsy. A lot of these things are new to me, too, but to tell the truth I haven't seen anything I want to feast my eyes on except you."

The warm blood came to Gertrude's cheeks, but she didn't care. It was worth a blush to feel so happy.

"You—you're from Maine, Mr. Warner says."

"Yes, way down beyond Bar Harbor."

"It must be beautiful there."

"Most beautiful place in the world," he agreed promptly. "Sea coast, islands, hills, forests, farm country. You can fish and hunt and swim and snowshoe—anything you want. But I suppose that would be tame for you city people who live in all this hustle and excitement."

"Tame? Why, it would be heaven! To have a quiet, restful home—"

He leaned toward her, his blue eyes meeting hers seriously. "Do you think you could be happy there? Do you think I—"

He was interrupted by Louis and Mabel sweeping back to the table. Mabel plucked at Farquhar's sleeve with a gay little laugh: "C'mon, Jimmy. Let's try out that step I was showing you last night."

"Well, I—ah—" Farquhar floundered, then reluctantly rose, with an apologetic bow to Gertrude. She watched her sister deftly lead him through the dancers, gradually reaching the far corner of the floor. Then suddenly she missed them. Seek as she did, her eyes could find no trace of them again.

"Have some more salad, Gertrude?"

With a start, Gertrude realized that Louis was asking her the question for a second time. She forced her attention from the dance floor to the table, and chatted idly with Louis. Finally he glanced at his wrist watch.

"Wonder where they went. Been gone fifteen minutes."

It was at least five minutes longer before the pair returned.

"Did you miss us?" asked Mabel. "I felt faint and we went out for a whiff of fresh air."

Farquhar sat down without a word.

Gertrude was surprised. She had never known her sister to have spells of faintness. Nor was there any evidence of illness in the way Mabel proceeded to attack her food.

"Perhaps," suggested Louis, "we'd better go home when you're through eating."

"Oh, I'll be all right now. Jimmy's a great help to a fainting spirit."

Louis yawned. "It's midnight anyway. Maybe Gertie's getting tired."

Gertrude felt that she would never get tired with James Farquhar at her side. She turned toward him as she started to speak. "Why, I don't feel—"

The words choked in her throat. While all the color that this joyful evening had put in her own cheeks slowly drained away, her eyes riveted themselves on the ruddy cheek of the man beside her. Two little splotches of carmine rested lightly there. Their source was unquestionably a pair of firm-pressing lips. All the ecstasy of this evening, the repressed but bubbling hopes in Gertrude's breast, were blotted out by those saucy red spots. She it was who was faint, and suddenly tired—heartbroken. She thought her voice

would fail, but it came in an uncertain and smothered way.

"I guess—it is getting late. I'd like to go home."

"Oh, well," shrugged Mabel. "Wait'll I finish this lobster salad. That's the trouble with me, I'm hungry."

THE pain-racked little woman who, though lying helpless in bed, had shared her niece's happiness that evening, was quick to sense her depression next morning. Aunt Mary was shrewd and kindly. Her questions were gently persistent.

Had Gertrude enjoyed herself? She guessed so. Did she like Mr. Farquhar? No!—very emphatically. Why? Oh, no particular reason.

Aunt Mary pressed her questions. She knew that in her heart Gertrude wanted to talk, to tell her story to some one who would understand. And in the end it came. Came from lips that trembled slightly, but with a chin that tilted upward. Gertrude's attempt to appear unconcerned was a failure. Aunt Mary knew how deeply her sensitive nature had been hurt.

"But, dear," she smiled gently. "Aren't you perhaps jumping at conclusions?"

"How? He was my escort, but he went out and held a petting party with Mabel. As if Mabel could faint even if she wanted to!"

"Mabel is good at acting," suggested the invalid.

"But why should she—"

"And hadn't she told you before that he was so nice he—what was it she said?"

"'That he gave her a pain.'"

"Yes. Well, don't you see? She pretended to faint and he took her out. And there's nothin' backward about Mabel. She'd kiss any man she wanted to."

"But why? She said she didn't like him."

"Humph! Mabel's been known to change her mind before. You wait, dear. You'll hear from him again. Don't give in to Mabel so easy."

Gertrude kissed her lovingly. "You always cheer me up. Somehow, the way—he looked at me—I wondered—"

"And if you looked at him with eyes as starry as that I'll bet he wondered, too! Of course he likes you. He'll come to see you and—there's the telephone! Shouldn't wonder if that was him now."

But this time Aunt Mary was mistaken.

"Listen, sis, this is Mabel," the voice came over the wire. "Will you do me a favor? Press my blue dress? I'm going out to-night and want to get started early."

"All right," assented Gertrude good naturedly.

"That's a good scout! And you'll have supper ready right on time?"

"Yes. Going out with Louis, I suppose."

"No-o, not exactly. Louis is taking Janet Hoffman. I'm going with Jimmy Farquhar. G'by now."

Gertrude heard a faint click. Her receiver dropped slowly onto its hook, but her eyes continued to stare into that black mouthpiece. Slowly it became blurred. But when this happened Gertrude gulped and set her soft chin hard. She wouldn't cry over any man!

Of course this man had seemed different at first. But he wasn't. Like all the others his lips said one thing and his actions another. She was lucky she'd found him out early. Now she'd go back to work and forget him and—and—

She was still staring accusingly at the inoffensive telephone when abruptly, as if in protest against her unuttered abuse, it shrilled sharply. Her every nerve jumped, and when it immediately rang again she could have screamed.

"Hello," she exclaimed harshly.

"Miss Newelson? Gertrude Newelson? This is Farquhar."

Gertrude trembled, and fought to control her voice. "Yes?"

"May I see you a few minutes to-night, Miss Newelson?"

"To-night? But haven't you another engagement?"

There was an instant's silence. Then, "What do you mean?" he asked.

"With my sister?"

"Your sister? Well, ah—I suppose so, in one way, but—"

"I feel sure she can entertain you adequately," said Gertrude, and her voice was cold.

"Oh, she's entertaining enough. But I want to see you."

"Don't bother! I'm very busy. I don't care to see you. Good-by!" This time the receiver was jammed on its hook with a clatter. Cheeks flushed indignantly, Gertrude turned away and pitched into her work fiercely. That was settled!

SHE took a melancholy pleasure in doing up her sister's dress. But she'd not do it again. She'd pampered her younger sister long enough, always indulging her selfishness and her failure to help support the home.

It would be better if Mabel got married. Maybe she would marry Farquhar. Apparently she had him hooked. But — absurd thought! — would she live in the country with a farmer? If she loved him—but somehow Gertrude could not imagine her light-headed sister loving the big, slow-moving man from Maine.

She shrugged wearily. Whatever happened, her own future loomed drab and discouraging.

Mabel bustled in soon after seven. "Everything ready, old dear? Louis'll be along soon."

"Louis? I thought it was Mr. Farquhar."

"Oh, Jimmy's going to meet us at the theater. He has to see somebody on business first."

"Oh . . . I thought you didn't like him."

"Wel-l-l-l, I didn't see all his possibilities at first. I've really fallen for him now." She snatched hurriedly at her food.

Gertrude nibbled abstractedly for a few minutes. Then she said, "Mabel, you'll have to help me more. You're earning as much as I am, but you're not paying nearly your share of the bills."

"I'm doing the best I can," pouted Mabel. "I have to go out more'n you do and—"

"Why do you?"

"'Cause I don't want to be an old maid even if you do," answered Mabel sullenly. "I want to marry a man with money, and how can I get him if I don't step out?"

Gertrude's lips had pressed together tightly. "I'm no more anxious to be an old maid than you are, though I'd rather have a good home than a lot of money. Incidentally, if you're hunting rich men why bother with Mr. Farquhar, who is only a scrimping farmer?"

Mabel glanced at her sister. "Oh, Jimmy?" she said elaborately. "Didn't you hear Louis ask me to help entertain Jimmy? I'm doing this for Louis."

"Well, if you think so much of Louis why don't you marry him? He's asked you enough times."

"Yes, but he hasn't got money enough yet. I'm trying to help him get it."

Gertrude looked at her suspiciously, and somehow the next words blurted out unbidden. "And were you helping him out last night when you stole Mr. Farquhar from me?"

Mabel stiffened. Then she rose, her eyes suddenly hard, and stepped to the door of her room, where she turned defiantly. "I didn't steal him! You just naturally let him slip. Heavens, if you'd only pep up a little! Jimmy was glad to get away from you. He said to me, 'She's pretty slow for fast company.' Those were his exact words." She hurled the words shrilly at her sister, and slammed into her room.

Gertrude bit her lips, which had gone white, and her eyes began to swim.

In a moment she went slowly into her own room and dropped on the bed. Heartsore and dejected, she lay until she heard Mabel, laughing noisily, greet Louis and go away with him. The door slammed behind them.

When finally she slipped back it was with the fear that Aunt Mary might offer sympathy that would only make the wound deeper. But the sick woman was asleep. Gertrude set about clearing the supper table, tempted to leave Mabel's dirty dishes for her to wash herself the next morning. But she was too good a housekeeper for that.

How could Mabel be so unfair? The thought slowly formed in Gertrude's mind that she had not noticed her sister's delinquencies before. Literally, they had seemed to leap into glaring relief overnight. Just since James Farquhar had come. But what had he to do with it? She didn't care about him. He was only a pleasure-seeking—

A SLOW knock interrupted her brooding. She opened the door and looked into the dim hall. Her eyes came to rest on a top vest button, and a voice rumbled down from the ceiling.

"Please don't think I'm rude, Miss Newelson, but I wanted to see you very much." James Farquhar hesitated, as though awaiting an invitation to enter. But Gertrude did not budge.

"Under the circumstances," she said stiffly, "I can hardly consider you other than rude. I told you not to come."

"I know, but—"

"And my sister left some time ago. You'll be late."

"I know that, too, but—"

"And I haven't changed my mind. There's no need to discuss the matter further."

"Will you answer a single question?" he cried in desperation. "I've a right to know why you're throwing me down like this."

"Have you?" Her head flew up scornfully. "Very well, I'll tell you. It's because you're too fast for slow company!"

And before the anger in her heart could melt and forgiveness take its place she firmly closed the door, and for the second time that night sought comfort in a pillow that could do naught but receive her tears.

NEXT morning the sisters greeted each other constrainedly. Mabel was glum, and made no mention of the previous evening. After she had gone Gertrude forced herself to paint, but her pictures held little of their customary sparkle and life.

To her relief Aunt Mary appeared to know nothing of the events of last evening, having slept with unwonted soundness. Twice she mentioned Farquhar but Gertrude changed the subject.

About ten o'clock the telephone rang.

"Listen, Gertie," Louis's voice greeted her. "A friend of mine who runs a tourist camp was in to-day and he mentioned that he was going to have a bunch of cards painted for some special use at his camp. I told him about your work, and he'd like to see you if you're interested."

"Of course I am. That's thoughtful of you, Louis."

"He's staying at the Statler. I'll take you down and introduce you."

"Wouldn't that be a lot of bother for you?"

"Well, it's business, Gertie. He sells furs at his camp, and we're trying to make a deal with him. Want to keep him good natured. I'll call at two."

The Statler! That meant Gertrude must look her best. She was glad she had made over her clothes. She arranged for a neighbor to stay with Aunt Mary, and had dinner early so that she would have lots of time to dress. Always prompt, she was quite ready when Louis came shortly before two o'clock. He regarded her with evident approval and admiration.

"You look great, Gertie. You know, till night before last I never knew you were so pretty. I almost think Mabel got jealous of you. Ready? I hope you feel like an auto ride because I've got the swellest little coupé in town out there. Brand new. Rides easy as a Zeppelin."

It was indeed an unusually beautiful and powerful car, and Gertrude exclaimed over it in wonder.

"Sometimes I envy people when I see them in cars like this, but I'm glad you can have one, Louis. Isn't Mabel thrilled?"

"As a matter of fact," he laughed, "she hasn't even seen it. You're the first girl to sit in this chariot. Say, we've got lots of time. How'd you like to take a spin out through the Fellsway?"

"Why, I'd love it, but—"

"O. K. With this heater on it's as warm as your own home."

Louis's sudden interest in her puzzled Gertrude, but she was enjoying the ride too much to ponder over it. He drove swiftly through the city traffic and swung onto the boulevard. The light fall of snow had been swept from the road, and everything sparkled brilliantly in the sunshine.

Into the Fells they spun, and along through the woods to beautiful Spot Pond. Suddenly Louis pulled up to the side of the road. In a sheltered spot before them stood a tall figure beside a car.

"Hi, Jimmy!" exclaimed Louis.

"Hello, Louis." James Farquhar waved to him and bowed to Gertrude.

"Say, Jimmy, this is the swellest boat I've driven in a long time."

"It does look good," admitted Farquhar, squinting at it.

"Good? Say—" Disregarding Gertrude, who sat stiffly erect, Louis climbed out of the car. "Just sit in behind that wheel and see how good it feels."

James Farquhar, also disregarding Gertrude, climbed in beside her. "Yes," he said. "I like this car." Deliberately he pulled the gears into low speed. "Well, so long, Louis. Much obliged."

"S'long, Jimmy. You're welcome."

The car slid forward smoothly. Too

amazed to be frightened, Gertrude stared at the square-jawed man whose coat sleeve rubbed hers. She twisted about to look back. Louis waved as casually as though abducting girls was his regular vocation. It was too late to open the door and jump—and anyway Gertrude didn't want to.

SHE spoke icily. "Will you explain what this means?"

"I will," he replied grimly. "It means that there is gas enough to carry us two hundred and fifty miles, and that we're going to use it to the last drop unless you agree to marry me sooner!"

Gertrude caught her breath in an audible gasp. Farquhar's eyes darted momentarily from the road to meet her startled gaze. He grinned. "If you'll meet me halfway and promise to listen to me I'll stop any time short of that two hundred and fifty. Right away would suit me."

Gertrude recovered her mental poise but found the turbulence in her breast was increasing. She managed to achieve a severe tone.

"You skidded on that last turn. I value my life, and if you can't drive and talk at the same time I'll have to accept your terms."

"Good! We'll pull onto this side road away from the traffic." He parked in a quiet place and turned to face her squarely.

"Out here where there are trees and fields I can think and talk straight. So I arranged with Louis—see here, what I want to know is this: why, after making me fall head over heels in love with you, did you give me the cold shoulder?"

"When did you ever fall in love with me?" countered Gertrude scornfully.

"The very instant you first opened your door to me and I looked into your eyes! Right there I could cheerfully have murdered Louis Warner to get him out of the way, because I thought you were Mabel, his girl."

"And do you usually show your love to a girl by paying more attention to another?"

"Why, I'd agreed to take her out that night and—"

"And the next night you agreed to take me out, but you took my sister off on a petting party."

"I did not!" he exclaimed indignantly. "The little idiot pretended to faint and I picked her up to carry her out into the fresh air. First thing I knew she had her arms around my neck, kissing me. Believe me, I hustled her back in a hurry. How d'you get that petting party idea?"

"Well," said Gertrude, weakening a little, "she left some paint on your cheek."

"Gee, I felt like a nickel," he said ruefully. "Is that all that made you sore?"

"Not at all," she answered stiffly. "I couldn't help seeing I didn't interest you much when you invited Mabel out the following night."

"Say-y," he exclaimed derisively. "That scatter-brained sister of yours has been trying to string you along the way she did me. I didn't invite her anywhere. Louis asked me to make up the fourth in a party; he said I'd probably take a girl named Janet Hoffman. I told him all right, and then kicked myself, because the only girl I could keep on my mind was you. I called you up, intending to tell you I loved you, and you hung up on me. Then I came to your home to tell you and you shut the door in my face. Now, by golly, I've got you where you can't stop

me from telling you. I love you! And if you've got any good reasons why I shouldn't kiss you, you'll have to trot 'em out quick because I'm going—"

She pushed him away—but not too hard, nor too far. His eager eyes and more eager lips were close to hers and it took more strength than she could summon to shake off his encircling arms altogether.

"You forget," she reminded him, "that I'm pretty slow for fast company."

"Oh!" He started to lean back, then changed his mind and moved closer. She thought he must feel the pounding of her heart clear through her coat. "You know," he said, "it took me hours to figure out what you meant when you said that last night. Did Mabel tell you I made any such remark?"

"Yes."

"Well, she told the truth." He said it solemnly, then hastened to explain as she made a movement to pull away. "But only part of the truth. My exact words were that you were just like me—pretty slow for fast company. Don't you see, Gertrude dearest? You and I are alike in being different from these people. Neither of us likes this crazy rush after excitement; we're cut out for more peaceful scenes. That's what I meant." Suddenly a twinkle came to his eyes. "Sweetheart, won't you become a farmer's wife—this farmer's wife?"

Somehow she found the coupé had grown narrow and that she was obliged to snuggle very close to him. Two absurd little thoughts flashed through her head. One was that all the birds she had ever painted had come to life and were singing with full-stretched throats. The other was—

"But I'm not qualified," she whispered. "I can't milk a cow or weed a garden or—"

"You're entirely qualified," he interrupted softly, "if you only know how to love me a little. I'm going to kiss you and—if you kiss me back, you're qualified!"

It was Aunt Mary who first heard the story from Gertrude's lips while the girl prepared supper. She was ecstatically happy and she flew from the sickbed to the dining room and back again, talking excitedly.

"And you're to go along too, dear. 'Way down in Maine, and I know you'll feel loads better. On a farm!" She giggled merrily. "That's what made Mabel change her mind about Jimmy! She learned from Louis that he wasn't a regular farmer, but a silver fox farmer. He sold Louis's company over three hundred silver fox skins. That wasn't till Louis agreed to kidnap me for him, though. And he bought that new car just to take me down to Maine. You know, he really does own a tourist-camp besides his fox farms, but he won't let me work painting cards for him. I couldn't, anyway, for a while, 'cause right after Christmas we're going to Bermuda to stay all winter. Isn't it all too wonderful!"

"Wonderful—but not too wonderful," murmured the invalid happily. "Nothing is too wonderful for you, dear."

What would he do next? She did not know, but—this was her adventure. She must be game!

The Wishing Tree

One day Carol sat beneath the magic boughs . . . "Even if I'm not superstitious," she vowed, "I'll try it. I wish—"

By KAY COBLENTZ

ACROSS the park gleamed the white columns of the Presidential mansion, and to its right, in elaborate ugliness, the gray walls of the State Department. Even now brightly dressed government clerks were hurrying up the front steps, apparently oblivious of the gay flowers on either side, trying to reach their desks before the nine o'clock gong should sound and they be marked late, like so many naughty children.

Carol Lane leaned back luxuriously on the hard bench. No hurrying for her during two blessed weeks. Nothing to do but rest, if one could rest in torrid Washington. Of course she would have preferred her vacation to come in the fall, especially when she couldn't afford to go away, but her own plans had to coincide with those of the Chief, and when he announced that he was leaving for two weeks in Maine, Carol diplomatically professed herself delighted.

After all, a vacation was a vacation, and a rest was a rest, whether one spent it in Lanna-by-the-Sea, or in Lafayette, Rock Creek and Potomac

Parks. Absolutely everything that one could do on a vacation was waiting for her here in Washington—golfing, tennis, hiking, canoeing, swimming. She was a lucky girl; still, she wished—

She wished—well, why not? Of course it was silly, absolutely silly, but she would keep it to herself, and it wouldn't do any harm. Right here in Lafayette Park was the Wishing Tree. She had perused a long account about it yesterday in the magazine section of the Washington *Star*. At least there had been plenty of testimonials of its power!

Now, just where— Oh, how perfectly funny! She was sitting under its spreading branches at this very moment. It was exactly like its picture.

Wishes are important things, especially if there is the least possibility of their coming true. She wished, oh, she wished—well, first, perhaps to test the thing, she'd give it an easy task. She wished that somehow, from somewhere, she could get the money to buy that string of carved jade she had found in that little Chinese shop off Connecticut Avenue. That necklace fascinated, haunted her. She dreamed of it, walked that way every morning, just for the pleasure of a lingering look. A thousand-dollar necklace on a government clerk, was, of course, ridiculous, and yet—how she wanted it!

And next to that, an adventure, an honest-to-goodness adventure, something not measured by time clocks nor bounded by typewriter keys. Something that never happened to a shorthand expert, something to match the necklace, of course! Just as the necklace matched that green sports suit, her one and only summer extravagance.

"At least I'll go and buy the hat to go with *that*," she reflected. With sudden purpose she jumped up, saluted the green boughs above her, and departed.

LOOKING for hats is a sure way to adventure of a sort. Not on department store tables, not in the bargain sales, but in the more exclusive shops, the ones with the single hat in the window and a "Madame" on the door. One never knows whether one will be treated as a prospective employee or a collector. Almost never is one welcomed. It is part of the psychology of the place to exude coldness. Hats for sale? Possibly. But to the right person only. Madame's hats are a special mark of prestige, of social standing. Try and get one if you are nobody. They appear then in the hands of a bored assistant, only one at a time, and in the most atrocious shades and shapes. Their unbecomingness is pronounced, and the temperature of the saleslady goes lower and lower, while the price tags go higher and higher.

And then to discover, by a quick peek into a hastily closed drawer, the exact hat one has dreamed of, to insist upon trying it on, and when the reluctant assistant has finally placed it back-side-to upon one's bobbed hair, to profane its loveliness with one's own hands. To profane? No, to bless! And when it is placed properly above blue eyes, that now unexpectedly have a green of the sea hidden down deep in their blueness, then, and then only, to see one's dream of a hat come true. Oh, that is rare adventure!

And the price, not suited to a clerk's pocketbook, certainly, but nevertheless obtainable if one goes a little slow on lunches, and does one's own laundry for a time. And with vacation, there's plenty of time for laundry.

So Carol emerged from Mme. Gueraud's with the one perfect hat of all the world wrapped like a jewel in the tissue paper of its little silver-striped box.

"On the road to Mandalay," she hummed under her breath. Strange how the magic of that song could haunt one. Vacation was beginning splendidly. If only she could meet Bill. Bill with the red hair which betokened his independence; and the impudent mouth, which held just a hint of loneliness in it. Bill, with his absurd ideas about not accepting help from his uncle, the Chief. Bill, with always a smile when he breezed into the office, and perhaps a flower or two, or a lingering word, while even more rarely, when his busy existence allowed it, a dinner, or a movie with Carol.

He was working his way through the University. Neither his uncle's blusterings nor Carol's timid protestations could make him change his mind, or lower his flag of independence. Neither knew what his work was. They would not ask, and Bill, for some reason never said. But he seemed to thrive on it, and was tanned and bubbling over with high spirits whenever either glimpsed him.

If the Chief knew of their friendship, and Carol thought he did know, he approved of it. Anything more than friendship appeared a long way off, and yet, they both were young, and until to-day comradeship had been enough for Carol. But now things were different. Nothing for her now but jade necklaces and adventure. Adventure, with a capital A!

Should she go back to her apartment? She might as well. The mailman would have been there, and she could try on her hat with the suit.

Yes, she had one letter, thin, with a lawyer's letterhead on the corner. What and who and why? Open it and find out. Slit went the corner, and something fluttered out.

2635 Grant Street,
Des Moines, Iowa.

DEAR MADAM:

At the request of Mrs. E. M. Lane, who sailed yesterday for Europe hoping to improve her health, we are forwarding to each of her nephews and nieces a check for $1000.00. Mrs. Lane wishes us to state that her intention is to leave the remainder of her estate to the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, and she is therefore remembering all other possible heirs before her death, in order that any protestations and sentiments of disapproval may be made to her personally. Otherwise she will understand that such arrangement is perfectly satisfactory to the aforesaid heirs. Any communications to Mrs. Lane will be forwarded by this office.

Sincerely yours,
PARKER AND DAVIESON,
Attorneys.

For goodness' sake! Uncle Ned's widow doing that much! And nobody had ever expected a thing from the eccentric, black-gowned, hermitlike woman. And where was the check? Oh, here on the floor. Green, just like the new hat and the jade necklace.

The jade necklace. Sure enough! She'd do it. Why not? Here was the money. Out of the blue sky a green check. Out of a blue sky? No, out of green branches, out of the wishing tree. It worked! It worked!

"Where the flying fishes play," she hummed as she dressed. Sports suit now, and hat, and in a few minutes the jade necklace would be hers. Vacation in Washington, lovely! Life was lovely. Aunts were lovely, checks were lovely, and wishing trees—well, wishing trees were simply superlative!

She couldn't help admiring herself as she went along. Show windows were made for that. Hardly any of the people really looked at the things displayed. They were watching themselves, mostly. Oh, there was a darling green pocketbook, marked down to three dollars and ninety-eight cents. She really must have that. Then everything, even her green and white shoes were different, not at all like those worn by government clerks. Any tourists in town would undoubtedly think she belonged to the diplomatic circle.

Here was Ostood's, and there lay the necklace in its teakwood box. An obsequious clerk took it carefully out of the window.

It was truly lovely. The carved, green beads, each as large as an Oregon cherry, slipped like cool water over her fingers. On the openwork pendant a green dragon curled delightedly, and the lotus blossoms around him seemed to open a little wider.

She would wear it, please. She slipped it over her head. Any one would think he was at least an ambassador's daughter!

Ostood himself stood before her.

"Mademoiselle is indeed fortunate," smiled the collector. "The necklace is very ancient, and exceedingly cheap for a thousand. Only the fact that one of the dragon's claws is missing makes it possible to sell it for that amount. One of the daughters of the Chinese ambassador has one exactly like this, but with a perfect pendant, and her necklace is priceless."

A daughter of an ambassador! If she kept on feeling like this, one adventure would be nothing; there would be dozens of them, simply dozens.

Ostood was still speaking.

"The necklace is said to exercise a peculiar power over its owner, to guard and extricate that one person from all sorts of difficulties. Indeed, I hardly expected or wished to sell it, but it seems to suit you—pardon me, your eyes, your costume, so perfectly, that I felt I had no choice. Do you belong to the diplomatic group, mademoiselle, a daughter—?"

Carol shook her head. She must go on. This transference of her thoughts was absolutely too amusing. "Then you'll take the check? It is not necessary for me to cash it?" she inquired.

"Oh, no, indeed. Perfectly all right." Ostood bowed. An attendant opened the door, and she swept out, a princess with attendant dragon and everything!

CRASH! Shop windows and green sport clothes, and, above all, a jade necklace, are not particularly conducive to care in crossing the street. They create an oblivion in the mind concerning traffic. Blackness—no, not blackness, surrounded Carol. Greenness and dragons and trees and running water, and arms and a voice—

"Carol, Carol, answer me! Carol, have I killed you? Carol?"

And blue eyes opened into brown ones, into a tanned face, a curl of red hair. Strange that she had never noticed that particular curl before.

She smiled, attempted to rise, and was conscious of the crowd around them. "Bill, I'm all right, just dizzy and—send those people away, Bill. I can stand up. Let me, Bill. Have you a car here? Let's get out of this."

"Sure you can make it?"

"Of course, Bill." (After your arms I could do anything!)

"S'all right, folks, a friend of mine.

Let us through." And Carol watched with relief the crowd dribble away while Bill assisted her gently into a yellow taxi, and himself climbed into the driver's seat.

Oh, so that was what he did—drove a taxi. No wonder he didn't want the Chief to know. But then, after all, it was wise. Kept him out in the open, and fit and able to attend to his studies at night, as well as his classes at the School of Foreign Service. The Chief was proud of that. In time he had told her, Bill might even become an ambassador. An ambassador!

"Are you sure you feel all right, Carol?" queried Bill after negotiating some particularly difficult traffic.

"Almost," she answered. "But as long as we're so near the office, would you mind stopping? I have some ammonia in my desk, and just a bit of that will make me feel quite myself again. The Chief's out of town," she explained considerately, "and you can park across the street, if you prefer."

"Oh, that's all right. He'll learn some time. I can't give up my independence, and you know dad's going just after the crash left the rocks mighty near."

"I really think the Chief is proud of your attitude," she confided. "Even though he does scold and fuss about it every time the subject pops into his head."

She leaned forward as she spoke, and Bill's brown fingers slipped around one of the green beads.

"Pretty," he smiled; and then: "But you didn't need them, not with your eyes!"

Carol slipped quickly out of the taxi with a fast-beating heart. Without looking back—she didn't want him to see her eyes just then — she hurried through the side entrance to the State Building. How strange to come into all this order and quiet, she thought, after her exciting morning. Just like another world. She noted the bent heads, the typewriters clicking rhythmically away. Everything proceeding along its regular routine. Open door after open door revealed the same monotonous industry.

But the door to the Chief's office suite was closed — and locked! Persistent knocking finally brought Sandy, rather clay-yellow as to color, and panic-stricken as to expression.

"Oh, it's you, Miss Carol. You can come in, I guess. I'll see," and he shut the door. Carol waited in amazement. She shut out!

The door clicked again, and Sandy opened it barely wide enough for the girl to slip through. Mr. Basset, the Chief's assistant, came toward her. He was more lined and grayer than ever, she noticed.

"Something terrible, terrible, Miss Lane! The Chief's safe has been picked, and the secret papers are gone."

"Not the Treaty papers?" gasped Carol. Those indiscreet letters and telegrams which held within them the possibilities of offended national dignity, of economic retaliation, of misunderstanding, even war!

Basset nodded miserably.

"Last night. The Chief's on his way back by airplane. We notified him—in code, of course."

"They were in that tooled leather case?" asked Carol. "And who—"

"There's apparently just one possibility. Carnot, an attaché, was dismissed from one of the legations last week. Seems they had something on him, which made them suspicious that he was a Bolshevik, and receiving outside pay and instructions. He was reported as hanging around the depart-

ment before he got the gate, and Quale, the morning watchman on the second floor, saw a man he swears was Carnot, running from the building at 4 A.M. He got into a Packard and drove down G Street."

Under cover of his words her eyes found those of— the man she loved

"If the Chief is coming he'll need me. I'll go home and change this dress and be back. This is terrible, terrible," Carol gasped.

"ARE you feeling worse?" and a frightened Bill rushed across the walk to meet her.

"No, Bill—that is, yes. It's terrible, terrible!"

"Here, get in quick, we'll go to Emergency."

"Emer — what are you talking about? No, no, Bill, that's all right, I mean I'm all right. It's the office, the poor Chief, the poor, poor Chief."

"What's happened?" Bill gasped.

"Bill, I'll tell you. I couldn't tell any one else, but the office has been robbed. The secret papers from the Chief's safe."

Bill turned white. He knew the importance of those papers; knew, too, that the Administration must have a goat. Some one would have to pay, some one big, to satisfy national honor, and his uncle would be the one disgraced.

Carol told him everything as he turned the yellow taxi toward her apartment.

What could be done? What—jam

went the emergency brake as a Packard came from a side street and proceeded on its speedy way, paying no attention to the warning red light.

"Bill, Bill!" screamed Carol. "I'm sure that was Carnot. He was bending over the wheel, and he's cut his hair different, and his silly mustache is gone; but it was, Bill, it was Carnot!"

Almost at the first words the taxi leaped in pursuit. Faster and faster. Where were the traffic cops? One hailed them, and his motor cycle hummed for a little while, then died out. Up Connecticut Avenue, regardless of signs, out to Sixteenth, through the Zoo, out on Connecticut again, and a sharp turn to the east.

"Street doesn't—" yelled Bill.

Carol didn't hear, but in an instant she knew. The Packard stopped, and a figure jumped; almost at the same time Bill stopped the taxi and leaped from the wheel. The street wasn't cut through. A stone wall had stopped the chase. Carnot, pursued closely by Bill, disappeared from sight over a bank. Not a sound, not a movement in the few houses on one side of the street. Only a cardinal whistled provokingly.

A shot rang out, and even as Carol was halfway out of the car a stumbling figure with a dangling wrist appeared over the bank. It was Bill—no, Carnot.

Had he killed Bill?

"Damn you, my wrist's broken! Get in there and drive, drive, drive, or I'll shoot." For the first time in her life she felt that peculiar thrust of steel in her side, which never needs any former recognition.

In the taxi—the man with her on the front seat—backing around, retracing their route. She did not drive too fast; her captor wouldn't let her. Out Wisconsin Avenue, past the precinct building, where the blue-coated guardians of the law barely glanced up. Then the man groaned and reached for a flask. For the first time she dared to look at him, and she glimpsed the tooled corner of a pocket dispatch case, protruding from his coat. He was reeling on the seat, evidently not from pain alone, for his breath was heavy with whisky.

Oh, if there was only some help!

Then she happened to glance at the front of her blouse, glanced for the coiling dragon, the water-cool jade beads. There was nothing there but the little tan silk blouse, with its scroll of green embroidery, no beads, no dragon—

"Here, drive up here," and the merciless prod pressed harder. They were at the Chief's own home. Who would dream of looking for him in the house of the man he had robbed? In summer the Chief did not stay in his big mansion, and the place was very quiet. The lodge showed no sign of life. Where was Jefferson, the caretaker?

If Bill only—but Bill was gone. With darkening sight she mechanically rounded the last curve, where trees completely hid the house from the road.

Then she must have fainted for the second time that day, for she knew no more until she came to herself, huddled on the floor of the Chief's library, alone. She looked from the window; the taxi was gone.

She was alone, mercifully alone. Even as she whispered the words the door opened and Carnot entered, swearing horribly.

"The taxi's hidden in the trees. They'll never know it's here until it's too late," he gloated. "Here's your

pretty. Thought you could drop it in the car and lead 'em on, did you? Well, you failed—beautifully!" And he tossed the curling dragon at her.

Carol sat up, opened her mouth stupidly, and closed it again. She had the dragon again, cool and hard. The carved beads were gone.

Somehow the feel of the jade in her hands gave her strange comfort; that, and the knowledge she had of the room wherein she found herself—knowledge which she knew her abductor did not possess.

As for Carnot, it was evident that he was nearly at the end of his endurance. The fear of the hunted breaks down the strongest nerve, and that fear, added to the pain of his broken wrist, was further complicated by the contents of the flask to which he had helped himself so liberally. He dashed the thing from him, peeled off his linen coat and threw it onto a chair.

Doubtless the clouding effect of the alcohol was responsible for his carelessness, or it may have been overconfidence. He glanced out of the windows, which, beside their burglar-proof gratings showed that the distance from the ground would prevent any one from leaving the house by their means. Then he leered at the girl and flung himself out of the room, not forgetting, however, to turn the key in the lock.

"MOVE, move, move!" Carol ordered her shaking body, and from apparent lethargy she was galvanized into action. The leather case first, and then the fireplace, she whispered. Under the rug, then through the trapdoor, the door which the Chief had shown her when she went there to take dictation. The door, he had said, led to a bricked in tunnel, finally opening in the little fir grove on the edge of the estate. Here, during the Civil War, had been a station of the underground railway, where runaway slaves had been given shelter and food.

As soon as she had opened her eyes in this room she had remembered, and on that one fact had based all her hope of escape.

The opened trapdoor revealed a long, winding flight of dusty, cobweb spun stairs.

Carol stepped carefully upon them; except for a protesting creak, they seemed firm enough. She slipped the leather case into the front of her dress, went down three more steps, reached up and seized the edge of the rug, which had concealed the door. As the door lowered she jerked the rug forward, to conceal the opening, turned and hurried on.

It was dark, darker than night, and Carol had never especially liked the dark. The thought of Bill—her grief for him—made things darker. And the Chief—he would be heartbroken. She ran on, stumbling, through the tunnel, out toward the grove of trees. A quick dash to the highway, and almost any car that came along — the first one, no matter who was in it—would do to rush her to the State Department. Nothing mattered but that. Bill was gone, and her heart, her light, with him, but there were other boys to be saved, the sweethearts of other girls to live. The papers once back in the safe, or a vault, guarded night and day by soldiers, there would be no war looming on the horizon.

So her thoughts ran on as her feet raced through the tunnel. She had gone a long way. She should be seeing light now. Surely she was nearing the end. The air, however, was

lacking in freshness. With one hand in front of her, feeling her way, she tripped. A loose brick had fallen from one of the side walls and lay in her path. Almost at the same time her fingers touched the vacant niche remaining.

Surely, oh surely it could not be much farther now! She was tired, so tired. Her groping hand met cold stone in front of her. Was there a turn here, to the right? To the left? No, nothing but wall. Wall on three sides. No opening, the end of the way. But the Chief had said—

Yes, truly the Chief had said, and Carol could not know that even as he had spoken of the passage to her, the decision to have the place closed up had been formulated. No use leaving the place open for exploring boys. The bricks might be getting loose almost any time now, and he had no wish to have serious accidents happen on his estate. Memories of his own boyhood made him fully aware how tempting the tunnel could be.

And now Carol knew the entrance had been sealed. A few attempts showed clearly that there was no chance whatever of loosening those bricks. Nothing to do but return to Carnot. To give him back the precious papers? No, never! The memory of the fallen brick over which she had stumbled flashed back to her. On hands and knees she groped her way through the tunnel. Ah, here it was, and here the place from which it had slipped. Carefully she fitted it back. It wedged tightly; apparently there was no revealing looseness. Surely Carnot would not find that one brick out of the thousand others. Painfully, slowly, she worked it out again. Carefully she opened the leather case, and with infinite pains slipped the papers into the opening and placed the brick in front of them. Oh, that the walls might hold this secret as well as they had in years past held other secrets!

With only the empty case in her hands she went back toward the opening—toward the dusty stairway, the library, toward—what?

Well, toward the bit of air that filtered through, and when she could endure the dark and the fear, the grief, no longer, back into the library itself. Perhaps Carnot would be gone. Surely when he had searched the house for her he would not linger. But he would be very certain that she was not there before he left. A man who had risked what he had risked was no coward, and the sudden shock of finding her gone and the papers missing might clear his befuddled head.

CAROL was right: it had cleared his head. But the madness of disappointment, and of fear, was taking its toll. Running torrents of invective, of cursing, fell from Carnot's lips as he upset the furniture and searched the house from top to bottom. The only possible explanation to him was that the girl must have had a key which in some miraculous fashion had fitted the door of the room. But she must be in the house. The place was burglar-proof, and it was only after killing, as he supposed, the caretaker, and obtaining his keys, that he had effected entrance for himself.

But as yet his desperate search had yielded no results. Foaming with rage, he had returned to the library. Even as Carol crouched on the stairway beneath the fireplace he strode over her head.

By accident his feet displaced the heavy rug, and the girl plainly saw a

long crack of light. Oh, soon, soon, now, she would be discovered. The papers were safe, but what of herself in the hands of this raging monster?

She thrust her hand into the pocket of the little green coat for her handkerchief. She touched the little dragon curling there, hard and real. She raised its coolness to her hot cheeks.

So long, so long it was since the care-free morning. Would she ever have peace again? Would she—

Across her thoughts like lightning shattered a voice: Bill's voice!

"Very clever of you, Carnot, to choose this particular hangout."

The man above her head whirled, moved threateningly toward the door, his pistol in his hand.

"Needn't bother, I'm not armed, you know. Here, take the door if you like. I don't mind changing positions with you." With almost a laugh in his voice, Bill crossed to the fireplace, and the little crack of light disappeared.

Carol felt hysterical. Bill had guessed, of course, where she was. And, in the very sight of the enemy, he had again concealed the edge of the trapdoor.

But how, how did he think of looking for Carnot in his uncle's house? How had he got there? The little dragon thrust itself sharply into her palm. She pressed it to her lips. Everything would be all right now.

"So you lost her, Carnot," came Bill's voice, low, amused. "And she took your papers, too!"

A torrent of abuse fell on his ears.

"Very nice, Carnot. Check and double check. She's not here in the house. But I could take you to the very place where she is or was not very long ago—that is, I could take you if I would—"

The answer was a shot, followed by the crash of falling glass from the mirror above the fireplace. Carol strained at the door, but it was immovable. Then came Bill's voice again:

"Don't mess up the furniture, Carnot, though if you meant that for a bull's-eye, you certainly did a nice job."

"Exactly," came the snarl, "and unless you wish to serve as the next target, you'll take me where the girl is."

"I take you? Oh, no, indeed. Got another guess coming."

"I think not." A second shot. This time a stifled moan from Bill.

"Oh, I say, Carnot, that's a little rough. Just because your arm is feeling rotten, no need to return the compliment."

"Show me, then," hissed Carnot. "Show me!"

"All right. Don't shoot again." And Bill's feet moved off the rug.

Carol waited unbelievingly.

The footsteps walked across the room to the door.

"This way—"

"Not outside the house. She's here," insisted Carnot.

"Oh, all right, if you know, why should I show you?"

"She couldn't get out, could she?"

"Well, you and I got in, didn't we?"

Of the relationship between Bill and the Chief, Carnot was fortunately ignorant. He hesitated, then announced gruffly: "Go ahead."

Sound of retreating footsteps, sound of a distantly closing door. Carol raised herself tentatively, then decided to remain where she was. It was possible that Bill was taking the other to the walled-in entrance; still she doubted it. However, he, like herself, might not know that it was walled in, and

was taking Carnot there to show him where she had been, certain in his own mind that she would by that time have escaped. Perhaps, after all, she had better try slipping out through the house. Probably Carnot would not have locked the door this time.

Carefully she raised the trap. The room was empty. She stole to the window, lifted the heavy curtain the least bit and peered out. There were Bill and Carnot, going toward the pine grove. Yes, it was toward the thicket, and they would learn that she must still be inside the tunnel; that she couldn't have escaped.

But, as the pair reached the forsythia bushes at the thicket's edge, the ground became alive. Men sprang from the very earth, uniformed men, and the gray-haired Chief, and a man with a bandaged head, who, Carol was later to learn, was Jepperson, the caretaker, still very much alive after hours of unconsciousness in the lodge, where Carnot had left him. In a matter of seconds Carnot was handcuffed and walking docilely away with his blue-coated guards.

Sobbing with relief, covered with cobwebs and dirt, clutching her dragon in one hand and the tooled case in the other, Carol ran from the house, straight into the arms of the advancing Chief, who cradled the hysterical girl tenderly on his breast, shooting amused glances at his nephew, who with one blood-clotted sleeve, stood helplessly at one side.

"Oh, dear, it was the Wishing Tree, or the Dragon, or something. I'll never do it again," sobbed Carol.

"Hush, child, it's all well that ends well, and some day you and Bill will love to tell this tale," soothed the gray-haired man. "All right, all right, Bill, just wait a second; be polite to your elders." And he turned his burden, dragon and all, over to the one-armed embrace of the younger man.

Hours later, clean and happy, Carol, in the circle of Bill's good arm, the trio were sitting in the same library.

The Chief had just finished checking over the secret papers, and was putting them back into their case. He turned a quizzical eye toward Carol, who laughed.

"I know it's silly. Still, the thing has happened, and I half believe that the tree and the necklace were mixed up in it somehow."

"Absolutely! They *were* mixed up in it." Bill's lips brushed her hair. "Do you know how I found you?" And he withdrew his arm, reached in his pocket and pulled out seven curiously carved pieces of jade. "The first bead was lying on the street where I left you, and the seventh one was just inside the gates here. I traced the taxi by them, and in passing this place, naturally I glanced over to see if by chance uncle was back and had come out here. And there she lay, just as pretty. Otherwise, I'd have been hunting yet. I used my key to get inside the lodge, and behold, Jepperson, becoming very much alive, but still tied up tightly and mad as a hornet. The telephone did the rest, but I couldn't wait for reënforcements, knowing that you were probably inside with that brute."

"We found the piece of silken thread still hanging from the closed door of the taxi," added the Chief. "One by one the beads had dribbled from it during that wild ride."

"If you're going to sit under wishing trees after this, young lady, wait until we go to China and I get you a new necklace, or else find the rest of

this along the Washington boulevards, to take care of you," grinned Bill.

"I'd depend more on Bill than the necklace, Mrs. Ambassador," added the Chief.

Then he got up and moved away, to leave them alone, turning in the doorway to smile back, a little sadly, at the tableau they presented.

Carol's arms were slipping up about the young man's neck; she raised her eyes, shining.

"Bill, is it really true? Are you going to be an ambassador in the diplomatic service?"

"Oh, hang the diplomatic service!" came the unpatriotic answer. "There's something I'd rather have than all the appointments in Washington!"

Carol did not pretend to misunderstand. She tilted her head back against his shoulder, drew her lips to the mold of a kiss. "All right," she told him, "go ahead. You can have that, too."

THREE DREAMS

THREE dreams has every woman born,
However her feet may roam,
The dream of a man, the dream of a child,
And the dream of a little home.

She may follow the star of success or fame,
Or travel to countries strange,
But still in her heart they will be the same:
The three dreams never change.

Reckless and resolute, brave and gay,
Or timid and sweet and shy,
She may hide them carefully all away,
But the three dreams never die.

Three dreams has every woman born,
And just three dreams alone:
The dream of a home, the dream of a man,
And the dream of a babe of her own.

—*Mary Carolyn Davies*

" You'll be a fool if you don't," Mrs. Day said. " But, mother, he hasn't asked me!"

A Silent Altar

Withered petals fell rrom a deserted, rose-strewn altar when a cruel message stayed the eager feet of a bride

By MARY DOUGLAS

IT seemed to every one watching Rosamond Day's starry, erratic course that she was headed straight for trouble.

Perhaps because she had wayward red curls and a dimple thimble-deep in the delicate oval of her face. More likely because of her dove's eyes set under winging brows.

Her stepmother approved of Rosamond, although she gave her daughter a last warning before she went to meet Cory Hamlin.

" You'll be a fool if you don't!" Mrs. Day said from the top step of the porch.

" But Cory hasn't asked me," Rosamond stated with her shocking frankness.

" Forget Dick Hamlin, he's reckless and foolhardy. A girl, if she's wise, should avoid him." But even as Mrs. Day said it she sighed.

" And a girl, if she's wise, I suppose, should take Cory Hamlin. Because he's steady, he's cautious, he's sure," Rosamond said.

Mrs. Day nodded her dark head. " Just tell Cory he's won-der-ful," she advised.

She watched Rosamond run down the walk, climb into a low-slung road-

ster. But she could not hear Cory Hamlin say,

"You look sweet in that pink thing, Rosamond."

"Thanks," Rosamond said coolly, "for your flattery."

"It wasn't flattery," Cory answered in his slow, cautious way. "When a man says a thing like that to a girl—what I mean to say is—before a man commits himself a girl should come halfway."

Rosamond smiled, disclosing the thimble-deep dimple that was sheer provocation. "But supposing he never commits himself — whatever that means!" She gave him a sidewise look, saw his smooth tan hair, his steady eyes, his mouth that had a hint of caution and his chin that had more than a hint of obstinacy.

"She should let him know in some way," Cory said, "so that he doesn't—"

He floundered and stopped.

She had a wild wish as they drove along that something would jolt Cory out of his caution.

A wish, however, is a dangerous thing, as Rosamond knew a moment later. For as they made the turn in the road some one sprang in front of them.

"Hands up or I'll shoot!" the some one cried.

It was the moment for Cory to display a commanding valor. But instead his hands shot high above his head on the instant. Rosamond, scarlet-cheeked, flung hers up too.

The fellow, a handkerchief over his face and partly covering his hair, looked at them through two slits cut for his eyes as he rapidly searched Cory's pockets. One dollar and ten cents—Cory had allowed just that for gas—a commutation book, a neatly folded handkerchief and a penknife. That was all. The robber flung the things back with a disgusted air.

Rosamond's pounding heart slowed down almost to normal.

The robber caught one of her lifted hands and examined it. She wore an aquamarine ring on her little finger.

"No, you don't!" Rosamond said defiantly. "Besides, it's not worth anything," and she snatched her hand away.

The holdup man hesitated. Rosamond saw his eyes through the slits, devil-may-care eyes of blue. Just the tip of a fair curl waved above the handkerchief.

He bowed mockingly, said to Cory, "Drive like hell or I'll shoot your tires up!" and retired to the woods back of a small empty shack.

Cory Hamlin drove as though the very fiends were after him. Once he turned to look at Rosamond and saw that she was convulsed with mirth. He stopped suddenly, mopped his brow with a hand that shook and asked her harshly what she was laughing at?

"You looked so—relieved," she choked, "when he gave you back the commutation book!"

The red ran up under Cory's nice clear skin.

"You acted like a little fool! He might have shot my head off while you defied him."

Rosamond saw too late that her candor had betrayed her. If only she had taken her chance and told him he was "won-der-ful"!

"Where are you going?" she asked instead.

"I'm going straight to the nearest police station and turn in a description. You don't expect me to take you on a pretty little drive now?" Cory asked from the depths of wounded pride.

They drove in sultry silence.

"Cory, did you notice that his hair was jet black?"

"Sure?" asked Cory.

"Quite sure."

"And his eyes—I never saw such black eyes!"

Cory cast her a suspicious look.

"I don't agree with you."

"Poor fellow, that limp will give him away, but, Cory, don't say anything about the limp and his black eyes!"

That was why some half hour later Cory Hamlin gave in the description of a low-browed black-eyed villain while Rosamond waited for him in the seat of a low-slung roadster.

WHEN he left her at the decorous hour of ten before her own doorstep Cory said, with that superior air that was so maddening:

"Next time I hope you'll think more of my life than of a smart answer, Rosamond."

But he looked willing to forgive her.

Rosamond answered, "Next time, if you'll step on the gas instead of slowing down no black-browed villain will have a chance!"

But she bit her lip when she saw him walking offended to his car. Just the words, "Cory, dear . . . I'm sorry," and she might have had him.

She stood for a long time on the porch leaning against a pillar, red-headed, pink frocked Rosamond, waiting for some one.

She had not long to wait. Some one came marching down the street, a battered suitcase in one hand, a branch of lilac across his shoulder.

"Rosie!" he laughed, setting down the suitcase on the bottom step, "am I in time?"

She smiled back into Dick Hamlin's wicked blue eyes. How could she help it? Bare-headed, his fair hair in a wild tumble, his gesture as he presented her with the lilac spray was that of laying his heart in her hands.

"In time for what?" she asked, breathing quickly.

"In time for you!" Dick laughed and sat down on the step beside her. "I got in on the early train and came straight to you."

"So I see," Rosamond said coolly.

"Not engaged—or anything?"

"Not—quite."

Suddenly she leaned toward him and asked him for his handkerchief. He fumbled and brought it out, a clean square of linen with two slits cut inexpertly.

"I thought so!" Rosamond said, holding it up so that the new moon shone through the slits. "Now let's see the pistol."

Dick brought out a toy bank modeled like a pistol.

"Oh, Dick, how could you?"

"I saw the car come bowling down the road and I saw that smug look on Cory's face. That did it. I knew unless I stopped him he'd say something dangerous."

"He'll never forgive me," Rosamond said sadly.

Dick caught her hand, the one with the pale aquamarine on the little pink finger.

"You're wearing it—on the wrong finger," Dick said slowly, "but even that can be changed. I must raise money somehow. In fact I've got to raise it—before we can be married."

"I might have something to say about that," Rosamond answered. But how fast her breath was coming and how her heart beats rose through her voice!

"I couldn't offer you much to begin with," Dick said gently. "Just the moon coming in the back door and a spray of lilacs. But think of it, Rosie, as soon as my fortune is made you'll ride in a Rolls-Royce and wear pearls to your waist."

"Oh!" Rosamond whispered, "as though pearls matter."

Dick leaned nearer still so that the moonlight glittered in his eyes. "Gosh," he told her, "I thought it was old Cory. Tough luck for him. But, after all, I love you, Rosie. I can't let Cory have you, even if he *is* the better man!"

"He's steady, he's cautious, he's sure," Rosamond said aloud as she had said once before that evening.

"And I'm reckless and extravagant and all the things I shouldn't be. But I'll get a job. Not in the bank with Cory, although I'll go there to-morrow and draw out every cent I have. Think of you and me having breakfast together, you in a pink frock, pouring coffee—"

"But you're crazy, Dick, it's impossible!"

"That's why," Dick said conclusively, "we'll do it!"

THE vision danced before her eyes. She tried to tell him, however, that she would not; tried to reason and found she could not—not while he held her hand and looked down into her eyes.

Instead her lips were on his and a wave of pure ecstasy swallowed up her last doubt.

"But I wanted a wedding," Rosamond said with a little-girl longing after a while, "bridesmaids and flowers and organ music. And oh, lilies of the valley!"

"I'll supply the lilies of the valley and the organist will play the wedding march. He's an old pal of mine, Rosie. All your friends will decorate the church first thing in the morning. But there's just one thing that stands in the way—if only I were good enough for you, darling!"

"But you are, Dick, you are," she murmured. Tears were thick in her throat and she felt their salt upon her lips as he kissed her one last time before she tore herself from his arms.

He said quietly, "then we'll be married to-morrow, Rosamond."

"But to-morrow—it's impossible!"

Dick only laughed at her.

She knew suddenly it was possible. Dizzy with bliss she left him and went into the house, and up the stairs on tiptoe, but not so lightly but that her stepmother called, "Who was that, Rosamond?"

"Oh, just Dick—Dick Hamlin," Rosamond tried to say casually.

"Remember the fairy story of the girl who went through the wood and only picked up a crooked stick in the end?" her stepmother's voice floated out to her.

Rosamond, however, stepping out of her dress, leaving a trail of silky undergarments in her own room, was watching the moon tip a branch and peer in at the window.

A crooked stick. Perhaps. For he was penniless; he was extravagant; he was foolhardy. He was besides only the adopted son of the lovely Mrs. Hamlin who had never been able to put foot out of her bed since her husband had been brought home fatally injured to die.

Dick adored her. He was almost as much to her as her own son, Cory, people said. If he sent her five dozen roses on her birthday and wrote her long tender teasing letters from the last

place in which he lost a job, that was Dick's way.

NEXT morning in a crisp pink linen, Rosamond went downstairs to find her stepmother at breakfast drinking black coffee and eating grapefruit in a negligee all frivolous lace and crêpe de chine.

"The diet," Mrs. Day smiled, "of the rapidly fattening!"

Rosamond did not smile back. She told her in a breathless sentence that she was going to be married this very day.

Her stepmother said impishly, "I suppose you never heard of the girl who married in haste and repented at leisure?"

"You are to be my matron of honor," Rosamond told her irrelevantly.

"At last," Mrs. Day sighed, "I shall be able to wear my lilac and blue chiffon and stun all the villagers!"

The day progressed rapidly. By ten Elinor Terry, the littlest bridesmaid, and all Rosamond's friends were decorating the church with white lilacs and all the bolts of white satin that the village store contained.

By eleven something arrived by special messenger. A ring crusted with diamonds in an exquisitely chased platinum band. Dick must have borrowed the money to buy it!

"How like Dick, how extravagant—and how sweet," Rosamond sighed.

At one o'clock a bouquet arrived, lilies of the valley with entrancing white satin knots and streamers. And from an out of town florist!

By three Rosamond was dressed in a frail white chiffon that her stepmother insisted was far too young for herself; and that she had only bought in a moment of weakness. Rosamond looked like an angel on the top of a Christmas tree, Mrs. Day announced, sitting on the bed in a jumble of tissue paper and smoking a cigarette in a long black holder.

Rosamond did look charming. Dewy-eyed and young, with the freshness that a young rose has in early morning.

At four the bell rang and Rosamond felt the hour had struck. A taxi had stopped at the door and the youngest bridesmaid was running quickly up the stairs.

She was sobbing as she ran.

"Oh, Rosamond, I just met Cory Hamlin and he says Dick—Dick—I can't tell you. I can't!" she sobbed.

"Dick's hurt—he's killed?" Rosamond said, white to the lips.

"Something even worse," the littlest bridesmaid chattered, "Dick drew all the money out of his mother's account on a forged check this morning. Everyone knows it. Everyone's talking about it!"

"I don't believe it! I won't believe it, that's all!" Rosamond cried.

Somehow Mrs. Day got the little bridesmaid out of the room, sobbing because the wedding was ruined after they'd decorated the church all so nice—

ROSAMOND sat, hands clenched, tearless, with a sword thrust through her heart.

Once she cried, "Oh, Dick, how could you?"

She heard her own voice crying it aloud. Then she dropped face downward on the bed and cried as though her heart would break. It had broken.

A crumbled mass was the frail white chiffon, her face was streaked with tears when at last Dick Hamlin rang the bell. She went down to let him in herself.

His young face was haggard, the sweetness of his mouth bitten into a straight tragic line. His blue eyes met hers, dropped, and he fumbled with his soft hat.

"Oh, Dick, it isn't true?"

ragged way across her heart strings, "I might go off and begin over."

"No, you've got to face the music," Rosamond said stanchly.

"Dick, I'll marry you anyway, and we'll face it—together."

In dreams she saw him coming toward her through the wood, and his eyes held lovelight

Dick choked, "it's true enough."

"As though I cared for money—as though I cared for this—" she pulled off the glittering ring and held it out to him. It dropped to the floor and rolled away into a corner.

Dick began in a voice that drove its

"No!" he said violently, "no! You don't think I'd let you—"

She looked at him desperately. Heartbreak was in her eyes; his were strangely bright and proud.

But suddenly he came straight to her and holding her wrists in his strong

brown hands he kissed her once tenderly and then again in a way she never forgot.

"That's for good-by, darling," he said tensely, "now I'll face the music."

FOR a week Rosamond fought her way through a bleak, terrible world. Because she was Rosamond she went back to the library next morning and took her place behind the desk as though nothing had happened. She stamped books, smiled a small white smile, but if any one offered her sympathy her face was so proud and cold the condolences were suddenly checked.

If at night her pillow was wet with tears no one was the wiser. And her stepmother—bless her—accepted the affair jauntily and never referred to it at all.

Once in the days that followed Rosamond saw Dick going by on the other side of the street, head up, face white and set. He was working, she knew, as he had never worked before, and making good, now that it was too late.

If only she could go away somewhere, anywhere so that she could bury her tragedy in decency. . .

One day at twilight, as Rosamond was returning from a long lonely walk, she saw Cory Hamlin driving and waved to him with a commanding gesture. Cory stopped, frowned, and waited.

"Oh, Cory, I wish you'd take me with you and drive to the end of nowhere!"

"Do you mean it?" Cory asked desperately.

"I mean it from the bottom of my heart."

Cory said with sudden violence, "That's just what I want—to get out of this damn hole! I loathe every house and tree in it, every grinning passer-by and every smug face I see!"

He was trembling, and for the first time she felt sympathy for him.

"And Dick—" she whispered.

"Poor fellow, perhaps he didn't know what he was doing."

It was the forbearance he seemed to show that broke down her last guard. She touched his hand with hers, "Cory, I never knew how kind you were, how strong," she whispered, and she meant it with every fiber of her heart.

Cory looked away before he answered, "I've always loved you. But I was waiting until I could save up enough to marry you, darling."

"Don't!" Rosamond quivered. "Don't ever call me that!" But she realized that he did not understand. "I don't love you, Cory," she added. "I want you to know."

"I love you and that's all that matters," Cory said with a grim smile. "I thought I had you until that—until he—" He stopped.

The scent of blossoming lilac came like a breath of memory to draw her close against his shoulder. What did it matter that her heart was broken, what did it matter if dew-drenched lilac was something that would brim her eyes with tears . . .

SO that was how it happened that Rosamond Day, in a white frieze coat and a fuzzy white béret, drove past the bay headed straight for the last adventure.

"We'll be married to-morrow," Cory stated. "To-night we'll get the ten o'clock train to the city."

"But I might need a toothbrush, and I haven't said good-by," Rosamond laughed, with a little break in her voice.

"We can buy a toothbrush in the city," Cory answered without a flick of humor.

They drove down the road past the bay as though a demon were at their heels. Rosamond had never known the sure and steady Cory to drive like this before.

Then—they passed a small house, windows dark, where the moon might come sliding in through the back door.

Rosamond tugged at his arm. Something impelled her.

"Let me out, Cory. Let me out for just a minute."

He shoved on the brakes savagely.

"Wait for me at the turn in the road, this side," Rosamond told him. "I have to say good-by—to a dream." And she laughed.

Cory waited because he must and watched her fly down the road, disappear within the shadow that the dark little house made.

Inside, Rosamond stood still. She hesitated, sensing a presence. Then she called, "Dick!" once. Called him again.

Some one who was lounging in the shadows rose and came toward her.

"It's Rosamond," she whispered.

As though she needed to tell him! Rosamond, all in white, a straying ghost that had been haunting him all these days . . .

"Well," Dick tried to say coolly.

"Dick, for the last time will you marry me?"

"I can't—after what happened."

"But I can ask you. And I do. We'll go off somewhere. No one need know. I'll get work. We'll pay back the money dollar by dollar—"

"My darling," Dick said with a groan, "don't you know it would follow us no matter how far we ran? Don't you know that some one would always find out that you had married a man who—"

"Then I shall marry Cory! I'm going with him so that I'll forget."

Dick came toward her; held himself back when he was within a step of her.

"You'll never do that. I'll stop you!"

Rosamond laughed. She had him now.

"Let's see you stop me! Either you give me your word that the past is over and you and I"—her voice broke on a sob—"or I'll marry your brother."

She saw his face quiver, change, and then his jaw hardened and she knew that look of resolute will. She turned without a word, and began to run down the road, so fleetly that Dick could not overtake her. She climbed in beside Cory.

"Cory, I'm ready."

She shut her eyes as he took the turn of the road. When she opened them it was to see a tall figure stagger in the glare of the headlights!

Cory cried, "The fool!" and swung the wheel; but it was too late. The car swerved, jolted over something.

In the glare of the headlights Rosamond had seen Dick's face.

BETWEEN them they managed to get Dick into the house at the side of the road.

"I'll get the doctor," Cory said, and sped away.

Rosamond knelt beside Dick in the small dark room. She saw with a twist of the heart that a crooked moon was peering in through the open back door. Dick's eyes were open.

"Oh, Dick, how could you do such a dreadful thing?"

"It was worth it, if I saved you from him . . ."

He felt her burning tears upon his hand.

It was so the doctor and Cory found them.

Cory tried to light the kerosene lamp with fingers that shook until match after match went out. "If he dies I'll be held for manslaughter!" he said with a grim and angry look.

But Dick was not going to die. He had had a nasty cut across the head. He must rest quietly for the night. When at last the doctor had gone Cory said quickly, without looking at Dick:

"We'll send a nurse from the village." He seemed to avoid Dick's eyes. "Now, Rosamond, we can go."

"I'm going to stay," Rosamond said whitely.

"Alone with Dick! What will people say—"

"I don't care what people say! You don't think I could leave him here with a strange nurse. . . ."

"After this no one will marry you!" Cory said darkly.

"Perhaps you won't . . . and Dick won't, because I've asked him."

Cory knew when he was beaten; even though the victor was only a slim bronze-haired girl. But he would not take defeat.

"We've lost the ten o'clock train anyway. I'll give you until to-morrow morning. I'll catch the express to the city. I shall be waiting for you, Rosamond."

Although he said it resolutely there was an undertone of pleading in his voice. She went to the door and watched him go off in the roadster.

Then she returned to stay with Dick. He was asleep, she thought. She turned down the wick of the kerosene lamp and watched it flicker out in darkness.

Dick muttered something, and she leaned to him.

"Polly," he moaned, "come here."

Rosamond's heart missed a beat. Silence. After a while he turned his face, groaned, and she heard his voice distinctly, "You silky-haired darling."

Rosamond, frozen, sat like a small silver statue while through the back door a crooked moon peered in.

The hours went on. Sometimes Dick called for Polly, sometimes he fell back and seemed to sleep.

But Rosamond knew all she wanted to know now. It was not of her he was dreaming in that hinterland of the unconscious, but of another girl with dark silky hair. Something in her that had been soft and melting was hard now. This was the real Dick then—the Dick who had forged his mother's name, the Dick who had never kept a job, the Dick who was a crooked stick.

SHE must have slept herself, for when she woke the sunlight was streaming through the open windows and bird song dropped down between the trees like iridescent beads. She looked quickly at Dick. He lay there smiling wistfully, with a smile that would have rocked her heart out of her breast—last night.

"Was I groggy last night?"

"If you mean by groggy did you talk, yes," Rosamond answered coolly.

Dick pulled himself up. His face had gone the color of ashes. "What did I say?"

"Nothing — nothing important," Rosamond answered in that same remote voice.

"I feel better—but hungry," Dick admitted ruefully.

Rosamond was cramped and stiff. She felt as though she had been bruised by stones. But she got up and went out to the small kitchen.

It was a man's kitchen. A skillet, a

kettle, a coffee pot with grounds that had boiled over stood about. She began to build a fire in the wood stove from the wood of the old packing case.

She knew now just what she was going to do; and she went about it calmly. When the coffee was on the boil and two eggs were cooking Rosamond washed herself in a small tin basin and combed her dark clustering curls in the tiny room that must be Dick's own.

She set the table and picked some forget-me-nots growing wild in the back yard, smiling a little ruefully to herself meanwhile. Then she called Dick. He seemed almost himself this morning.

His old smile, his eyes feverishly bright, his face still thin and white. Once Rosamond, catching his smile, felt her heart tighten. But that was all over.

"Do you realize," Dick said, "that this is the last time we'll ever be alone like this? But Rosie, my darling, I'll always have something to remember!"

She looked at him, his white shirt open at the throat, his fair hair tumbled, and though she fought against it, for a moment she felt the old surge of hot longing. Then she remembered Polly. Ah yes, it was true Dick was a heartbreaker, Dick was all the things she hated most in a man . . .

"It was like you, Rosie, to give me this last hour," Dick said softly.

He finished his second cup of coffee, crushed out a cigarette and came around to her, kneeling beside her in the way that only Dick could do without self-consciousness. He caught her hand—it was ice cold and laid it against his cheek. Then he pulled her toward him and his voice whispering, "Darling!" rang through her blood like a trumpet call.

"No, no, not any longer!" she sprang up, faced him. "I want to tell you that I'm going to meet Cory on the ten o'clock train."

"Rosamond, you mustn't do this thing!"

"Nothing you can say will change me," she told him with a defiance that was almost bitter.

He stood looking at her, this slip of a girl who could twist and break his heart in her little hands. Then deliberately he took a sprig of forget-me-nots and put it in his inside pocket.

BUT Cory did not wait for her at the train. Instead, driven by impatience, he came back to the little house in his own low slung roadster. Rosamond met him.

"I'm coming, Cory," was all she said.

He could afford to be magnanimous now. He turned to Dick.

"Feeling better?" he asked.

"Fine!" Dick said unsteadily. "I wonder, Cory, if you'll let me see you off? It's the last thing I shall ever ask of you."

Cory assented grudgingly.

"My motor boat's here," Dick announced. "I'll get you over in a jiffy."

Cory said that he much preferred going on the ferry. But he followed Dick and Rosamond reluctantly down to the Rosie that was moored at the end of the shaky homemade dock. Dick bent over the engine, did something to it with a bit of oily waste, told them to step in and waited.

Rosamond stepped in and sat as far away from Dick as was possible. With a heartening chug-chug the boat started off stertorously. But halfway across the bay it wheezed suddenly and was still. It rocked placidly on the blue gleaming waters.

"Get it started at once!" Cory commanded.

With a quizzical look at his brother, Dick asked: "Know anything about motors?"

Cory's answer was something like a snort.

Dick lit a cigarette and lounging back met Rosamond's dove eyes. They looked almost black now with her sudden illuminating knowledge.

"I thought we might float about here for a bit and talk the whole thing over."

"This is a put-up job!" Cory said violently, "I might have known—"

Rosamond stood up. She had taken off the white coat and kicked off her slippers.

"We can swim for it, it's not more than half a mile or so!" she said furiously.

"I don't swim a stroke, you ought to know that, Rosamond," Cory told her in a mood of black disgust. "If we'd taken the ferry as I wanted to in the beginning—This is all your foolishness, Rosamond."

The girl sat down, and as she turned saw that the lumbering old ferry was close upon them. Cory, however, disgruntled, his pride wounded, did not see it. He stood up and the next moment a wave splashed over the small craft and toppled Cory overboard into the bay.

It was an accident that had not been planned for in Dick's carefully laid scheme. He heard Rosamond cry, "Dick! He's going down—" And then she saw him poised for an instant before he dived.

The ferry was rocking the small boat perilously with its waves, but Rosamond, looking at the blue waters, saw that Dick had Cory securely and was towing him to the boat.

What happened next occurred so suddenly that Rosamond did not understand. There were screams, shouts, hoots from the ferry before the lumbering old monster slewed out of their course. After that the rest was nightmare.

Dick had managed to get Cory into one of the lifebuoys they flung overboard, but he himself had been struck and rendered unconscious by the enormous paddle wheel.

SOME forty minutes later, each one of which had seemed like an aeon to Rosamond, she found herself in the Hamlins' house. Dick had been carried there unconscious. Cory was only the worse for a wetting.

Rosamond hovered over Dick, watching for the faintest quiver in that still face. She knew at last that the world had ended for her when the light went out of Dick Hamlin's eyes.

Then she saw the miracle happen. There was a commotion on the stairs. Mrs. Hamlin, who had not put foot out of bed since her husband had been fatally injured, was coming down alone . . . She came straight to Dick and knelt beside him.

"Dick," she murmured, "I shouldn't have let you do it, even for Cory." She sobbed aloud.

Dick's eyes flickered for the first time, then slowly opened.

"Dick, if you'll only live I'll tell every one it was Cory who forged the check and that you shouldered the blame for my sake . . ."

Dick's only response was a whispered, "Poor old Cory . . ."

When at last Dick and Rosamond were blessedly alone with only an old setter dog, head on his paws, lying beside Dick, the prone man put out his hand and said aloud, "Polly!"

But it was later that he spoke directly to Rosamond.

"Darling, I had only enough gas to last us five minutes—"

Rosamond's eyes brimmed over. Against his lips she spoke:

"Did you ever hear of the girl who went through the wood and picked up a blossoming branch? Oh, Dick, Dick, I love you! Can you forgive me?"

And Dick's answer was the promise of a life of love to come.

HEART TO HEART

THOUGH we had uttered
No spoken word,
Lass, through the stillness
A whisper stirred,

That made us tremble,
That made us start,
For we were hearing
Each other's heart.

The dusk was heavy
With mignonette,
We leaned together,
Our warm lips met:

"I love you! I love you!"
Our glad hearts heard,
Though we had uttered
No spoken word.

—*Edgar Daniel Kramer*

As always, the sight of him waked a beating pulse in her throat

Love to the Rescue

Inch by tortuous inch, a girl crept down a cloud ladder in a race with swooping death for the man she loved

By J. U. GIESY

HAD any one told Mary Farley that Fate, the Great Director, had assigned her to a vastly different rôle from the one she expected to play in the Cosmic Film Corporation's latest production that morning, she would in all likelihood have laughed.

"Good-by, moms," she said as she kissed her mother and covered her crisp brown hair with a close-fitting little hat.

"Be careful, darling," the older woman said, the light of an unvoiced terror in her eyes.

"Of course."

Mary nodded, smiled in reassuring fashion and went out.

Her mother was afraid. And Mary knew it. Nor did she blame her for her fears. There *was* danger in her work. But on the other hand it had made a great difference in their lives.

Mary had been responsible for her mother's support ever since her father's death, and at first there was no denying that such support as she had provided had at times been meager indeed. Then she had seen her chance and taken it.

She began doing stunts for the moving picture concerns, risking her life as a "double" for some star of the Hollywood firmament whose neck was far too precious to risk. And later when the epidemic of pictures in which the airplane played a prominent part had attacked the studios, she became a parachute jumper as a part of the day's work.

At first, to tell the truth, she, like her mother, had been a bit afraid. But lately she had come actually to enjoy her work. There was a certain thrill, a subtle reaction approaching intoxication in literally flirting with death; in the swift, downward plunge, checked as she pulled the ring and the silken umbrella opened and wafted her slowly back to earth.

Too, there was a thrill in the crisp bits of paper she carried home to her mother, as much money for a few brief moments of effort as she had formerly gained from the haphazard employment of an extra in the entire span of a week.

Thanks to their air-minded attitude, the continuity writers had produced a steady demand for her work. All of which meant comfort rather than penny pinching to both her mother and herself.

It was of such things Mary was thinking as she rode toward the location where she was to do a jump as a part of the picture Cosmic Films was making—that huge spectacular production, titled "The Last War," which, with Niel Dillon directing, was expected to eclipse all pictures of similar type.

Niel Dillon? As she pictured the gray-eyed, firm yet kindly lipped ace of the Cosmic directing staff, a smile lay softly on Mary Farley's mouth.

She had known him ever since the days of his first major success, as a man of imagination, of understanding, with an almost uncanny ability to make others visualize his own mental pictures. She had known and admired his active, broad shouldered, lean flanked figure from a distance. But that was all. Except that—if a cat may look at a king, a little extra girl or a little parachute jumper might gaze at a Niel Dillon.

Once or twice, it was true, she had fancied that she caught his eye before or after one of her stunts, and he had smiled. But he had such a delightful way of smiling at almost every one, that one would have been very foolish to attach any great importance to so casual an act—as foolish, indeed, as Mary Farley had actually been in her heart, if not in the active, well-balanced little brain behind her long lashed, violet irised eyes.

A WEEK ago the unbelievable had happened. Mary had taken her mother to dinner at a café quite in vogue with the movie folk.

Niel Dillon, instead of passing their little table, paused and smiled down at them.

"Good evening, Miss Farley," he said. "I understand that you're doubling for Miss Lawton in this Last War thing I'm trying to shoot."

"Oh — good evening, Mr. Dillon," Mary stammered. She was startled at his recognition, surprised that he knew her name. She felt her heart begin to hammer under her breast, and knew that she flushed as she presented her mother.

"May I?" Niel Dillon drew up a chair in quite informal fashion. "You ought to be proud of your daughter, Mrs. Farley. I've seen her work. Even in this age when our women are

constantly surprising us, one recognizes the fact that she possesses a chilled steel nerve."

"She has too much nerve," Mary's mother agreed with a shake of her head. "It was all right as long as she was just an extra, but now, every time she leaves me I'm scared to death."

Dillon nodded. "Don't blame you," he declared, his eyes turning to Mary's face. "You were an extra before you took up stunting?"

"Oh, yes," Mary smiled. "I was a 'girl to sit on the porch of a summer hotel — girl to make one of a house party crowd—girl to wheel in a tea cart,' that sort of stuff. I don't blame mother either, of course. We're all alone, you know. But tea without cakes is not a very sustaining diet, and since I've taken up stunting we haven't lacked the cakes at least."

"I see." Mary noted a quickened interest in Dillon's eyes. "I wonder if you would do me the favor of having them with me to-night?"

Embarrassment, swift and sudden, overcame Mary Farley. She cried: "Oh—I didn't mean that!" in a way that made Niel Dillon laugh.

"I know you didn't," he protested through that laughter. "The suggestion was merely a selfish effort to gain an hour's pleasure for myself."

Mary had carried the recollection of that evening with her ever since. Dillon had ordered. They had talked. Mary told him about her father's death, her struggle to provide for her mother and herself. Dillon's eyes had held hers. Music and laughter had pulsed about them. They had danced. She, Mary Farley, had danced with Niel Dillon, with his arm about her, wondering if by any chance he could feel the quickened beating of her heart, wondering why in the name of all reason he had elected to show her attention, surprised toward the last to find his conversation pitching itself to a low toned, more personal note.

"Do you know I agree with your mother? You're far too precious to risk," he said in the pause before an encore.

"I've told you the reason, Mr. Dillon," she said, startled by the patent sincerity of his words.

"I know." He nodded as the music once more swept them into its rhythm. "And I respect you immensely for the way you've taken it on the chin and smiled. But—if you'd care for a screen and voice test, I'd be very glad to arrange it."

"Of course, I'd—like it," Mary heard herself assenting. Her brain was whirling. Niel Dillon was offering to help her! She began to wonder if Cinderella was a fairy story after all. A screen and voice test—why, it was the thing she had been fighting for!

She lay awake for hours that night after she should have been sleeping, recalling the pressure of Niel Dillon's arm about her, the expression of his eyes, the sound of his perfectly modulated voice. Under cover of the friendly darkness she asked herself if the new, sweet thing that seemed to be flooding her entire being could possibly be—love, and knowing deep in her woman's soul past any doubting that it was.

Since then Dillon had chatted with her when they met, and he had kept his word. The tests had been made. Mary screened well, and the play back of her voice was good. Dillon congratulated her on the result, and in a way that set her heart once more to racing, assured her that her days of stunting were practically over. He promised

to see that she was speedily given a chance in a minor part.

BUT to-day she was to make the jump the script of the "Last War" called for, and she had not the slightest intimation of that dare-devil task, decidedly not in the continuity of the picture, which she was later to undertake.

The location for the work in prospect was a-hum with activity when she arrived. A battle in the air was to be filmed, and the planes were being groomed as carefully as though the mimic fray were genuine rather than make-believe. They stood drawn up ready for the take off, huge wing-stretched mechanical birds, over and in and under which ground men swarmed like flies.

Beside the camera plane, a cabin affair in which the camera men were to film the aërial combat, Mary and Dillon in breeches, puttees and shirt. And, as always now, sight of him waked a quick little beating pulse at the base of her rounded throat. He was still there when she had dressed, and she went toward him smiling, a fetching little figure in her trig flying suit.

"Hello there!" he greeted her. His eyes, his face were lighted with the enthusiasm of his work. The emotion of the creator was in his voice. "If this thing goes off as planned it ought to knock 'em cold. Greatest air battle of all time, even if it is a fake."

"It's — wonderful, I think," Mary said, sweeping the busy scene with a roving glance that steadied as Tommy Wilson, her own particular pilot from whose plane she was to make her jump, strolled up. "Good morning, Tommy."

"Mornin', Miss Farley." Tommy grinned as Dillon turned away toward a machine from which a girl in an exact duplicate of Mary's suit emerged at his approach. "Looks as though the star was comin' on the job. Well, the sooner the quicker. I got our bus warmed up."

Mary nodded.

Laura Lawton, the star, posed before a battery of boxes. They put her into Tommy's machine. They even taxied the latter down the field as though to a take-off. Then they stopped it, and Mary and Laura changed places and Tommy really took off that time. Up and up he drove for a good three thousand feet before he leveled off and Mary dived over the side and pulled the rip cord and floated back to the ground.

Whereupon the star stepped back into her part and Mary simply stood around and watched, except that just before the squadron of planes went up for the battle action, Niel Dillon hurried past her and smiled and waved a hand.

Mary gasped as she saw him enter the cabin of the camera plane. She had not known he was going up. Yet it was like him to do so, to want to be right in the center of the action, she thought.

Beyond her the planes were rising, swinging into formation with a roar of engines, a swirling smother of dust. Behind them the camera plane trundled slowly into motion, roared down the field, staggered, lurched in a drunken fashion and—rose.

Mary gasped. And then she stood staring at it where it mounted slowly, with a broken landing gear dangling in a sinister hint of impending disaster beneath it!

She saw it and understood. The gear had broken at the take-off, and the pilot had managed to get it up. But

though he had saved himself and his passengers from the momentary danger, he was now in as great if not greater peril than before. He was up—but he couldn't get down safely with that broken gear beneath him. To attempt it meant almost certain death. Mary's heart rose in a sickening fashion into her throat. Because—Niel Dillon rode on that crippled death plane

MARY experienced a sensation of suffocation. And then she started running toward where Tommy Wilson was standing with back-tilted head and a jaw that sagged.

"Tommy!" She spoke his name tensely and touched him on an arm.

"Huh?" He lowered eyes in which she read consternation. "Oh—hello, Miss Farley. Tough break for Dillon, that. Everything set an' that gear busts an' gums up the works. Gotta hand it to the pilot of that crate, though, for liftin' her up the way he did."

"Tommy!" Mary interrupted his flow of words. Dimly she realized even then that he was merely talking, was deliberately evading the more sinister aspects of the situation presented by the crippled mechanical bird now circling above their heads.

"Huh?" he said again, and eyed her. Suddenly he shrugged. "Here, here, don't you get scared. I betcha this don't faze Dillon. I betcha he goes ahead an' takes his picture of this dog fight the same as though nothin' had happened to his bus. An' when he's got it all into his boxes he'll strap on a chute an' do a caterpillar back to earth. Ain't that what you'd do yourself?"

"Why—why—yes!" Mary caught a deep, deep breath. She nodded. Tommy was right, of course. That first reaction of sheer horror which had gripped her, faded. The plane was doomed, but those who rode it could leap to safety when they were ready. A faint smile twitched at her lips. "Tommy," she said, "it sounds awf'ly silly, but—do you know—I never thought about their—havin' chutes."

"Sure!" Tommy grinned. "Look there! What did I tell you? Dillon ain't a guy to let a lil thing like a busted gear interfere with his mornin's work."

Mary glanced at the camera plane and nodded. Suddenly she was filled with a feeling of actual personal pride. The damaged machine was still roaring up and up in the wake of the other soaring planes. And the momentary panic which had assailed the personnel of the field had seemingly passed. One could mark it in the very postures of the men who clustered here and there to watch.

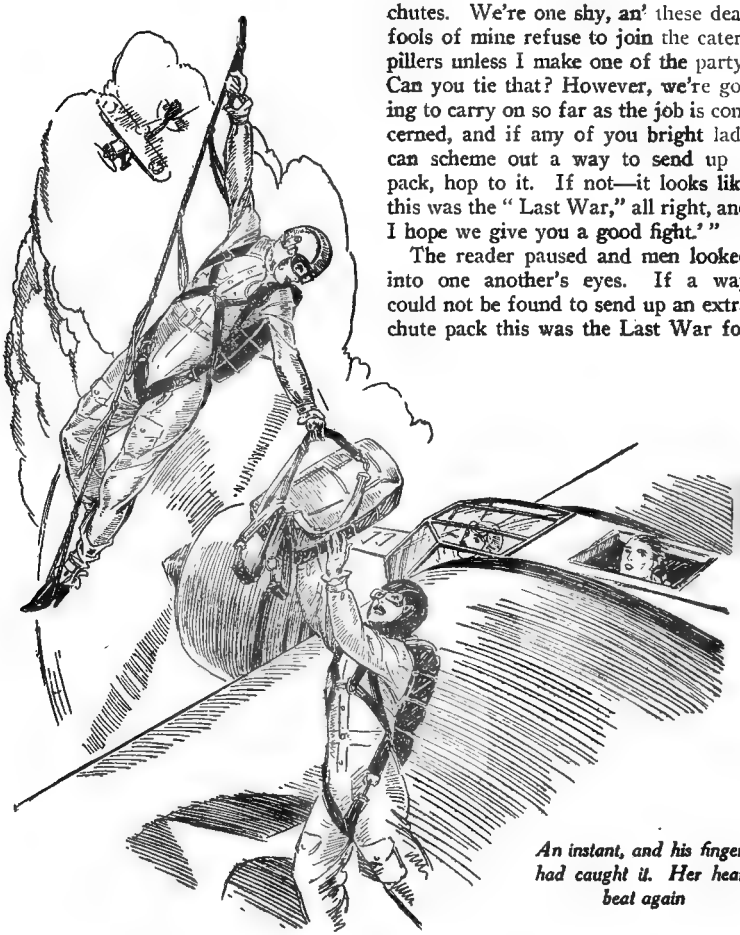
All at once the girl laughed in catching fashion. Niel Dillon was—Niel Dillon. He was up in the air with a damaged gear, but the main point was that he was up. He had gone up for a purpose, and now that he was up, no matter how, he meant to carry that purpose through.

Or so she thought, until from the side of the rising machine there flashed a tiny dropping speck of white.

"Humph!" Tommy Wilson grunted beside her. "Come on. They've thrown out a note."

Side by side they raced to where a group of ground men had pounced on the fallen message, were bending their heads above it—the leaf of a notebook torn out and covered with a penciled scrawl of words. Others were running up. They formed a close packed press about the one who held the note.

"What is it? What's he say? What's he goin' to do?" tense questions barked.



An instant, and his fingers had caught it. Her heart beat again

"Shut up, youse guys," the man who held the bit of paper snapped. "Keep still an' I'll read it to you. It says plenty. Lis'n. It's signed 'Dillon,' an' it says: 'Whoever serviced this plane is a bum at figures. He didn't put in a sufficient number of chutes. We're one shy, an' these dear fools of mine refuse to join the caterpillers unless I make one of the party. Can you tie that? However, we're going to carry on so far as the job is concerned, and if any of you bright lads can scheme out a way to send up a pack, hop to it. If not—it looks like this was the "Last War," all right, and I hope we give you a good fight.'"

The reader paused and men looked into one another's eyes. If a way could not be found to send up an extra chute pack this was the Last War for some one. And in her heart of hearts Mary knew who that some one would be past any doubt. Niel Dillon—the man who called his associates dear

fools because they refused to take their one chance of safety and leave him to his fate. Niel Dillon, the man she loved and had never loved more than in this instant when in those few penciled, half joking yet terribly pregnant words the spirit of the man stood forth.

A dry sob rose in her throat. About her men began to speak.

"But—how in hell—" she heard one grumble.

"Wilson! Where's Tommy Wilson?" another asked.

"Here!" Tommy shoved his way to the front. Mary heard his voice. "There's just one way I can think of to get a chute to him. That's to fly over him like they do in refuelin' an' try to drag a pack alongside the cabin. I'll make a stab at it if you'll get me a pack an' a longish piece of rope."

"No—Tommy!" Mary thrust her way to his side. She was breathing quickly. There was the light of a dawning purpose in her eyes. Under the spur of need she saw everything clear—how a chute pack could be carried to the camera plane, how she, and she alone of all those souls gathered about her, might really hope to save Niel Dillon's life. "That would be only chance work," she went on. "The pack isn't heavy enough. But"—she turned to the men about her—"go get a rope—get plenty of it, and a pack. Tommy and I will get it to him. Go get it—quick!"

"Yeah. Hop to it," Tommy backed her up. "How much rope you think you're needin', Miss Farley?"

"Why—I—I don't know," Mary considered. "About a thousand feet."

"All right. Get it." Tommy directed. Then as men turned away to do his bidding, "What you goin' to do?" he asked.

"Make a ladder," she told him. "When they get the rope we'll knot it into loops I can slip a foot into—one every eighteen inches. Then we'll fasten it onto the landing gear of your plane and after we're up I'll pay it out. You'll fly over the camera plane and I'll climb down with the pack and you'll—"

"I'll probably wash you into the side of the thing an' break your neck or swing you into their prop an' get you sliced," Tommy interrupted.

"Oh, no, you won't." Mary looked him full in the eyes. "You won't do that. You're too good a pilot, Tommy. You'll play your part. You'll line over their plane and hold it till I can climb down and hand that pack to Niel Dillon. You see you're really holding his life as well as mine in your hands." She paused and smiled.

And the muscles in Tommy's lean cheeks went hard. "Uh-uh!" He nodded and swallowed. "An' that ought to steady my nerves, I reckon. I can just sit an' tell myself I'm matchin' my nerves with yours. An' that's a considerable job." As he spoke his thin young face was filled with an admiration he made no effort to disguise. "An' I'll do it," he added, "or I'll stick my nose down an' give the papers a new form of suicide to describe."

AFTER that came a time which Mary was to remember as no more than an interlude of haste. Men came trailing lengths of rope and set to work. With Mary and Tommy supervising, they stretched the ropes on the ground and began the task of knotting them into regularly spaced loops.

Meanwhile, above and beyond them, the aërial battle raged. Planes roared

in formation, circled, dived and swooped. Unmindful of the catastrophe to the camera plane the participants in the make believe warfare did their appointed parts. And Niel Dillon kept his word. As steadily, as consistently as though nothing whatever were amiss, his plane moved through and around the mimic combat, gathering its action into the permanent clutch of the whirring celluloid tape.

A second accident occurred. Two combat planes crashed together and fell in smoking ruin. But both aviators jumped to safety and a membership in the so-called caterpillar club of modern fame.

Mary saw it. In her breast her heart felt swollen. Its beat was a heavy throb. Once more that feeling of pride in the man to whom she had given her love was pulsing through her—lifting her body and spirit to the effort.

Then the fashioning of the long rope ladder was completed. Tommy was supervising its fastening to his gears. "You ain't aimin' to crawl back up to me afterward, are you, Miss Farley?" he questioned.

"No, Tommy." Mary smiled and shook her head. "I'll wear my own pack, of course, and—if I get the other one to them, I'll jump, and if I don't—it won't matter—I guess."

"Eh?" Her companion's tone was startled. His keen eyes searched her face. She saw a vague understanding waken in them. "But—you're goin' to make it. I'll see you make it. I'm goin' to show you a real piece of flyin'," he said. "Say—where's that extra chute pack?"

Somebody handed it to him. He helped Mary to her place. The engine roared and the plane shot down the field ahead of a cloud of dust. Tommy pulled back on the stick and they took the air. Up, up he drove to where the swarming planes still circled above him, up, up toward the crippled plane on which Niel Dillon rode.

Niel Dillon! To reach him, help him, save him. Mary rode with a strange set smile on her mouth.

In those moments of swift, mounting flight she was woman—all woman, speeding as women have sped and always will to the aid of the loved man, at any cost of risk or self-sacrifice.

Up and up, still up and up. They were above the mimic combat. The roar of a hundred motors, the chatter of machine guns was in their ears.

Tommy circled and leveled off. Below them was the plane on which Niel Dillon rode to death or life. Tommy lifted a hand and nodded. Mary began paying out the long looped rope. It dropped down and down and down—a slender spider web strand, swept back at a long slant beneath them by the speed at which they moved—a seemingly impossible pathway along which a woman must descend hand after hand and foot after groping foot, as she moved on a mission of love.

Mary looped the strap of the extra chute pack over her neck and rose. Tommy stretched a hand to touch her fingers. His eyes were mere glints between tensely slitted lids. "Luck, kid," he said, and cut his engine to the slowest possible speed.

Mary nodded in understanding and swung herself over the side of the fuselage. Clinging with hands and feet, she slipped down to the gear beneath it, thrust a toe through the topmost loop on the speed-drifted rope. Below it was a second. She lowered her other leg slowly to it, let go of the landing

gear above her, and set tense hands to the rope itself.

SAVE to one trained as Mary Farley had been, the thing would have been an impossible endeavor. With the rigid support of the plane abandoned, she felt for a moment lost. Winds born of the quivering fabric above her beat about her, tore at her grip on the slender strand that held her, drove her breath back inside her throat. Beneath her weight the makeshift ladder turned and spun, so that through a long first moment she closed her eyes and simply held on.

But after that breathless instant she fought back the qualms that assailed her and lowered a foot to another loop and another. So very slowly it seemed, yet surely, she went down and reached the end of the spider-like strand at last. And having reached it, she lifted an arm through one of the loops above her and, literally hooked to the end of the rope, looked bravely down.

Tommy was doing his part. The camera plane was directly beneath her and she saw that they understood. It had swung aside from the mimic battle and was moving at a speed about equal to her own.

As she swung above it, a man emerged from the cabin and crawled out upon a wing. Tommy was dropping her carefully closer and closer to that glinting surface on which the man's figure crouched. Clever boy, Tommy. He knew what he was about, knew exactly what would happen if he swung or dragged her against the other machine. But he had promised her a skillful bit of flying, and he was making good. He was letting her down very, very slowly, holding his plane to the one above which he moved.

Mary slipped the strap of the extra chute pack over her head and held it ready.

Lower and lower, closer and closer. She was not more than ten feet above the wing of the camera plane. She was not over five feet above the top of the cabin, and directly over the crouching figure that waited her approach. Then—the man on the wing had risen, was reaching up for the pack. Holding it by its strap, she lowered it toward his upthrust fingers, felt him grip it, and waved an arm.

On the instant Tommy answered her signal, and she was swung up and away from the other machine on a circling slant, with the upsurge of accomplished purpose in her heart, a smile born of accomplished purpose on her mouth.

The mimic battle was ended, the planes that had staged it were dropping back to earth.

The door of the cabin plane came open. From it a dark little figure shot forth, dropped downward, vanished from observation beneath a blossoming mushroom of white. Another and another. She counted the crew of the predoomed plane as one by one they jumped, till all at once the huge machine shuddered, appeared to stagger, and turned its nose drunkenly to earth. Then, still smiling, she kicked her foot out of the loop in which it had been resting, let go of the loop above her, and—dropped.

Down, down! She tugged at the ring of her chute pack and floated down in the wake of those other mushrooms of white. Under one of them Niel Dillon was floating back to earth and safety and life, she told herself. The thought was a pæan of thanksgiving in her heart. She had saved him. Her task was ended.

Far beyond her the camera plane

dived blindly to swift dissolution. It didn't matter in the least. All that really mattered was that Niel Dillon was dropping gently back to life, to the admiration of his fellows, to safety.

Suddenly Mary felt very tired. The silken support above her rocked her gently this way and that. She closed her eyes. The smile faded from her lips and left her at last but a girl with a quivering mouth.

Down—down! Ground men were running ant-like to where the men from the camera plane would drop. Down and—down! Her own foot touched earth at last. The silken folds of the parachute emptied and folded together above her.

Hardly conscious that she did so, she sank to her knees, and without any effort to free herself from the shoulder harness, stretched out face down, pillowed her head on an arm and began to sob.

"MARY — Miss Farley — Mary, darling!" A man's voice speaking beside her — Niel Dillon's voice. "Mary—speak to me, won't you? Oh, girl, you're not hurt—are you?"

She stopped sobbing because of a sudden and very sweet and wonderful surprise.

Niel Dillon had called her darling.

"Mary?"

She forced herself to shake her head. "No—I'm not hurt, Niel," she mumbled without even trying to see him as he bent beside her. "I—I—guess I'm just—a little bit—tired."

"God love you! You—wonderful creature. There never was another like you." There seemed to be something the matter with Dillon's voice. It sounded funny, hoarse, unsteady, all clogged up. He was kneeling, fumbling with the chute pack straps. Mary felt the touch of his strong, sure hands upon her. And in quite unreasonable fashion she wanted to giggle—to laugh.

Then she was free, except that Dillon's arms were around her, that Dillon was lifting her to a place against his breast, and that she could feel the sure, full beat of his heart.

"Listen — you wonderful, wonderful girl. Do you know you saved my life?"

"Of course." She looked up to meet his eyes. "That was what I went up for, Niel. That stunt of mine was not in the continuity of your old Last War. Your script clerk will tell you that."

"You darling." Niel Dillon smiled in a wistful fashion. "Well, you saved my life, and you nearly gave me heart failure, too, when I saw you coming down that rope. On the level, Mary, I've seen a few things one way and another as I've knocked about, but that was about the scariest thing I've ever been called to gaze on. Do you know what that idiot box man, Regnier, did? He shot it from first to last. He's got a picture of it—"

"Really?" Mary gasped.

"Uh-uh." Dillon nodded. "But that's not the point. Now that you've saved my life, the question that's worrying me is — what you're going to do with it, Mary Farley?"

His eyes were asking something.

"What I'm—going to—do with it?" Mary faltered, and found herself and Dillon engulfed in an eagerly milling crowd. "Put me down — Niel," she panted. "I'm—all—right."

Then, with his arm still about her, she stood as ground men, the cast of the "Last War," even Laura Lawton,

swarmed about them with a babble of voices and faces in which the emotion of tense waiting was giving way to grins and smiles of relief. They wrung her hand, they mouthed words of approbation. They even patted her on the back. Tommy Wilson shook hands with her and Dillon.

Finding herself the center of attraction, Mary fought back the qualms of nervous reaction that for a few brief moments had assailed her, and answered smile for smile and word for word. But she found no time to answer Niel Dillon's question, with its strange, sweet hint that in saving his life she had preserved it not only for him, but also for herself.

That came afterward, when in his own car he drove her away from the field—drove her, not back to the Cosmic plant or home, but away from both along a winding road that led high up in the hills. On a hilltop he brought the car to a stand, and turned to look into her face.

"Mary," he said, "do you know that I love you—that to me you're the most wonderful thing in the world?"

"Love me?" she repeated, and proved herself a woman in her ensuing words. "You know, Niel—you don't have to say—that. Niel Dillon doesn't need to make any such return because a—a parachute jumper—managed to—save his life."

"I'm not in love with a parachute jumper." He shook his head and smiled. "I'm in love with a very wonderful girl, and if I have anything to say about it, she'll never make another parachute jump!

"It isn't as sudden as you seem to think. Wasn't I trying to get you out of that game before this accident occurred? Just why do you suppose I was doing it, Mary? D'you mean you don't know I was in love with you before this morning—that I've been in love with you for weeks? Why do you think I stopped at your table the other night, except to see if I couldn't gain your interest? Oh, my dear—my dearest dear—don't tell me you've saved my life without being willing to share it—make it complete!"

"No-o," Mary Farley said very softly. "No, Niel—I won't tell you that. Because"—all at once she flushed a rosy pink—"because you see, Niel dear—it wouldn't be the truth. I don't think I could have possibly done what I did to-day if—I hadn't—loved you. Only I—I didn't know you—cared. You see, I never did believe in Cinderella and—I—I wear a number four shoe. But—if you really—want me—"

"Want you?" Niel Dillon interrupted. He laughed in glad, triumphant fashion. "Sweetheart, I want you more than I've ever wanted anything before. Let's go somewhere and celebrate."

"Let's go home and tell mother," Mary amended. "Let's go tell her that everything's all right. You know, Niel dear, she's always so afraid when I'm making a jump—"

"That's out from now on. She'll never need to be afraid again that way—ever."

For one breathless instant his arms crushed her and their lips clung.

Niel Dillon meshed his gears. The car moved forward, sweeping them down from that high hilltop of mutual understanding, to the levels of routine life.

But Mary's heart was singing as she rode with her lover at her side. Because quite as well as he did, she sensed all the purpose of love and its sure protection that lay behind his words.

"You're too late, young fellow," growled the mayor

Cash 'n' Carry

"Play fair" was Dell's code; then she faced the lovelight in one man's eyes with another man's ring on her finger!

By AUGUSTA LEINARD

ON the fifteenth night of October Barrickton was holding its annual autumn celebration at the Town Hall—a dance preceded by "vodivil," real professional talent from Chicago.

The performance was over and the dancing had begun when a jaunty young man, with a disarming smile and brown eyes that looked right at you, shouldered his way through the moving couples and cut in willy-nilly on a portly, prosperous looking gentleman of about thirty-five, who glared as the newcomer spun away with his auburn-haired partner.

"That was a bad move, big boy," said the girl of the auburn tresses as they waltzed divinely. "William Glasby's a strong man physically and financially; furthermore, he's mayor of this town."

"Can't help it. I generally duck after one of these shows, but I stayed for the dancing because I saw you in the audience."

." I didn't see *you* in the audience," she retorted, thinking " that lilt in his voice matches the lilt in his step."

" I wasn't in the audience, Angel."

Purple pansy eyes appraised him through a veil of dark lashes. " My name happens to be Dell Rogers," dryly. " I didn't see you in the show."

" Yes, you did. I was camouflaged as a barrel of flour."

" Oh," and her laugh rippled out. " You were that white-faced clown with the darling dog!"

" Couldn't you say that darling clown with the black-faced dog?"

" Why should I? So you're Cash 'n' Carry. Is Cash your real name?"

" I expected that; they all ask it. Cashel Thomas Wood, that's me; but I've been Cash so long that few people know I've got a Wooden handle to my name."

" Why Cashel?"

" My mother's maiden name. Mom and pop were both acrobats. They were doing a double in the circus when the trapeze broke. I was five then, and Uncle Peter took me. Wanted to make a lawyer out of me, Uncle Peter did. I had just entered college—that was four years ago—when a circus came to town and, blooey! it was all off. Guess it was in my blood. I was doing my bit in the circus as the Boy Wonder a couple of seasons later when Carry ambled into the ring. She was only a puppy and the crowd howled. After that she was made part of my act, and we've teamed ever since, Carry and I. Carry's bred of a long line of performing poodles, and I'll bet there isn't a dog in the country can touch her when it comes to tricks."

" She's a darling!"

He flushed with pleasure at her enthusiasm.

" Carry's my pal, all I've got, but I'm willing to share her with you, Angel."

Dell laughed lightly. Some eyes he had. He wasn't fresh, either; just a winning kid. She was only twenty-one herself.

THE long auburn bob was perilously close to the blue cheviot shoulder as Dell parried, " Some line you've got."

" Hope to die it's no line. The minute I glimpsed you I knew it was you or nobody for the rest of my life."

" Nix, Romeo; I'm half engaged to the mayor."

" Yeah? Well, I hereby engage the other half. What are you doing in this burg anyhow?"

" I run a beauty shop."

" Beauty shop!"

Cash dropped into the green wicker chair beside her on the veranda toward which they had some time since wended their way. And noting how the full moon glorified the yellow satin vision with its challenging purple pansy eyes, he whispered hotly, " You've cornered all the beauty in this town yourself, Angel."

" Some line," laughed Dell.

" It's the gospel truth."

As he moved his chair an inch nearer, the girl significantly moved hers an inch farther away.

." So you work in the circus."

" In the summer time. In the winter Carry and I get bookings now and then, mostly "—suppressing a sigh—" then. We've got a swell act, but somehow it doesn't get over."

" That's too bad."

" Sure; especially when we're so ambitious. We're aiming to make the big time, Carry and I, but so far we don't even register well on the small circuit, and it takes all our spare jack to send

Uncle Peter. You see, when I broke my promise to be a lawyer I agreed to pay him back what he'd paid out for my education."

Dell's eyes sparkled and involuntarily her slim, holdable hand wandered toward the arm of the adjacent wicker chair. "I love that! I love fair play."

"Me too, but it keeps Carry and me busy trying to meet the board bill. This is the first work we've had since the circus closed."

"Poor boy." Dell's voice was a gentle murmur.

The moon, which had dipped under sudsy clouds that flecked the vast dark bowl above them, suddenly reappeared, highlighting a sympathetic softness in the girl's eyes and etherealizing her delicate features.

"Gollies, you're a sail on a shipwrecked sea," breathed Cash. "A—a lifesaver, that's what you are."

Somehow the distance narrowed between the sun-bronzed face and the smooth creamy one. Their lips met and held blissfully for a long moment.

Cash had lifted her to her feet, was holding her tight. "Angel, you're the answer to an acrobat's prayer," he murmured unsteadily.

But the girl pushed him away, secretly provoked with herself. Why, this boy was dynamite to her technique! He had her heart running around in circles. It was ridiculous!

"We're both moonstruck," she said firmly, although there was a suspicious quaver in her voice. "After I told you about the mayor, too. And me talking about fair play. Come on, let's go."

The mayor was going from group to group searching. As the two entered the crowded ballroom he hurried toward them and gave Cash a squelching look.

"Supper's served," he said to Dell. "Let's eat."

"You took the words right out of my mouth," cheerfully interposed Cash, the unsquelchable.

The mayor, who weighed two hundred pounds and looked vastly important in his evening clothes, towered over Cash.

"You're just two weeks too late, young fellow," he said, his voice simmering. "I don't know who you are, but you'd better be on your way."

As the two men stood measuring each other with unfriendly eyes, Dell, noting a crowd gathering, quickly slipped her hand through the mayor's arm, and smiled up at Cash.

"He did ask me two weeks ago," she said. "Good-by—Cash."

"*Auf wiedersehen,*" returned Cash with emphasis.

Sitting at the long table beside the mayor, Dell was conscious of vague regrets. She might have mentioned her phone number or—but how silly! His ambition was the big time; hers was to marry money.

"Who is that fellow, Dell?" sharply demanded the wealthy man at her side.

"He's from Chicago," she replied, and adroitly changed the subject.

But she couldn't forget Cash so easily. His lilting voice, the thrilling moment on the veranda. There had been other veranda moments, but never one like that.

IT was difficult to hide her surprise and pleasure when she ran into Cash a few days later outside the Barrickton Theater on her way back from lunch.

"Well, if it isn't Lord Pantomime," she drawled with well simulated indifference.

"Hello, Angel," he greeted her joyfully. "I was just going to sleuth this whole dog-gone town until I found you. Good news. We're playing this house the last half of the week. Benton, the manager, saw us perform at that shindig and liked our act."

"Good," said Dell.

"You're my mascot. Girl, you sure got me going. You haven't been out of my thoughts since the night I met you."

"Not so good," said Dell, putting up a mental barricade as she met the warm young eyes.

"I've told Carry about you, too. Come on and meet her."

She followed him through the narrow alley up the narrower spiral stairway. On a prop chair backstage sat Carry, a good-sized French poodle, beautifully clipped and suggesting a jet-black, curly-maned lion in appearance.

"Carry, this is the idol of our dreams," introduced Cash.

Carry wagged a welcoming tail and said "Woof-woof."

"Tell her how old you are, old kid."

"Woof-woof-woof."

"And how long have you and me been pals?"

"Woof-woof-woof."

"The darling!" cried Dell.

Cash beamed at her admiration.

"Carry, this girl's our mascot. She's going to travel with us some day—on the big time."

"Woof-woof," approved Carry, enthusiastically licking the white hand caressing her closely curled neck.

"That settles it," said Cash, with his irresistible smile. "*She* loves you, too. You belong to us now, Angel!"

Dell frowned at him. "Be sensible, Cash. How long did you say you'd be here?"

"We're playing to-night, Saturday and Sunday, and I expect to see you on all three nights."

"Wrong! To-night I've a date with the mayor. And Cash," she warned, "don't rile the mayor. He owns this whole town. He even owns this theater."

Cash was plainly unimpressed. "He might own it, but the manager booked me and I've got a contract for three days."

"Well, I wish you lots of luck."

"Angel, my luck started the night I met you."

He tried to take her hand, but Dell was quicker. She could not afford to let love tempt her. She must have money—she *would!*

"Save that for some one else. I tell you it's wasted on me. So long; there's a customer due right now for a permanent."

But he blocked her descent at the narrow stairway and his warmly expressive voice quivered as he begged, "Say, give me Saturday anyhow, won't you? I've got a break in this town, and if you'll stick with me Saturday night I've got a feeling that things will start coming my way."

"Saturday night! Why, I can't do that!" exclaimed Dell, and was surprised to hear her own voice adding, "All right, big boy. Saturday night is yours."

"Hurray! Carry, did you hear that? Come on, you need exercise. Let's walk as far as the hotel with our mascot."

AS they emerged from the stage entrance they ran squarely into the well dressed form of his honor, the mayor, who greeted the girl before noting her companion.

When the mayor grew angry his face grew florid. It grew florid now.

"So *you're* here again," he grunted, looking Cash up and down.

"No foolin', Mr. Mayor," cheerfully. "Cash 'n' Carry are giving you folks a chance to see a real act in real action."

bending down and patting Carry's neck.

"You'll have to drop in and see the show, Bill," quickly interposed Dell. Ruffling the mayor's plumage was something that must be avoided.

"I don't care about it, but if you want to go," he conceded unwillingly, "I'll take you Saturday night. You can make the last show."

"I'm ahead of you this time," jubilated Cash. "She's promised to stick right with me Saturday night from six o'clock until after the performance."

Cash was saying it with kisses when a knock sounded

His honor at that moment became aware of Carry, who was sniffing inquisitively around his noble legs. "Oh, I see. You're that clown with the funny black beast."

"The funny black beast" rumbled ominously.

"Look out," warned Cash. "Carry understands everything, and she's temperamental. Whoa; steady, old girl,"

"What!" The mayor stared at her in surprise.

"Uh-huh, I'm going to put in a substitute."

But Dell flushed uneasily. She knew that Saturday night was her busiest night and she knew that the mayor knew it. She could see that he was fuming.

As they walked along he muttered

something and directed an irritated kick at the dog, which was still nosing his immaculate trousers.

Cash grabbed Carry just in time.

"Mustn't play rough with Carry," he said, the lilt quite gone from his voice. "She hasn't a sense of humor and might take you seriously, which wouldn't be a joke at that. Quiet, old girl," he admonished, holding fast to the angry dog's collar.

"That beast ought to be muzzled," growled the mayor.

"Oh, Carry never starts anything," Cash retorted amiably.

Fortunately they reached his hotel at that moment and Dell said good-by with alacrity, to which he replied, "Don't forget; Saturday night."

"Saturday night, Dell," caustically echoed the mayor, as they went on alone, "the night you've told me that nothing short of your own funeral could drag you away from your shop. I don't understand your interest in this half-baked acrobat."

"I'm sorry for him," explained Dell. "He's had tough luck and I'd like to see his act go over."

"Oh, you would." Something in his tone caused Dell to glance up at him quickly.

"Bill, I know you believe in fair play. Well, that boy's hoping to get a break here, and I want you to promise not to queer his chances."

"I? How could I queer them?"

"Promise, anyway." She smiled up at him persuasively. "You're a big man, Bill. Now act the part."

The mayor's chest went out. "All right," in a mollified tone. "I'll promise, providing you promise never to see him again."

"Never—after to-morrow night. You keep your promise and I'll keep mine."

"I was going to take you riding Saturday night in the new boat"—the mayor always called his automobiles boats. "There's something I wanted to ask you."

There was no mistaking his meaning.

"Save it till Sunday night, Bill," she said, giving him her sweetest smile as she left him.

Well, I've landed him, Dell reflected as she began permanent waving operations on her victim. That automatically disposes of Cash.

BUT on Saturday night her heart was singing with joyous anticipation as she got into a new plum blue velvet frock that she really couldn't afford. Prudence would take permanent possession of her again to-morrow, came the thought as her blood rushed through her veins with a new sweet excitement, but to-night—well, to-night was to-night.

Cash drew a deep breath when he saw her. "Angel, you've got everything!" he murmured.

He was carefully groomed and faintly redolent of shaving lotion. Dell thought of radiantly clean babies in soap advertisements. As they walked along she slipped her arm through his.

Cash wanted to take her to Chez Alexandre, a swanky stopping-off place for motor parties passing through Barrickton, which was on an arterial highway between Milwaukee and Chicago; but, instead, Dell steered him into Werden's, a homey little tearoom where the eats were delicious and the prices modest.

He kept up his usual flow of chatter, but to-night there was a certain tenderness running like a golden thread through his raillery.

"Who ever heard of a jane taking a

john to a joint like this when he propositions a ritzy café?" he bantered. Then softly, "Angel, Carry and I have just lived for this night."

"Oh, go on!" But Dell's eyes smiled mistily into his. "How's the audience been treating you?"

"Fine." But his cheerfulness was forced. "Sunday's the big day here, they tell me. People drive through from all over the State, and sometimes there's an agent out front. But," smiling into her eyes, "Cash 'n' Carry are going to make their big hit to-night when their mascot's in the wings."

They didn't, though. The evening audiences were polite, but undemonstrative.

Dell and Cash didn't allow this to mar their after-theater supper, however. Sitting in Barrickton's only chow mein palace, with Carry occupying a chair between them, they laughed and talked while the hours flew by.

Dell kept a firm hand on the wheel of the conversation to make it stay on the conventional highway, but at the gate of the cottage where she roomed she read in the boy's eyes all the things she had kept him from saying.

Stars winking, silences throbbing, leaves rustling in a mighty oak tree.

"Gosh, I just can't say good-by to you," he whispered in that tremendously appealing voice. "If you'd only be our mascot to-morrow, I'll bet we'd put some life into that Sunday crowd."

"Listen, big boy," Dell came back firmly. "This has been a nice little interlude, but it's finished now! I'm a busy woman. Anyhow, I'm expecting to marry the mayor—and it wouldn't be fair play, that's all."

He was silent for a moment. Then, "Guess you're right," he admitted bitterly. "It *wouldn't* be fair play for a ham acrobat who can't get a hand even out here in the sticks to try to hook up with a queen like you."

Impulsively Dell's arms were around him and she kissed him. But it was mother fashion, she was sure. "You're a honey," she said, and rushed into the house.

ON Sunday noon, as she toyed with a belated breakfast at Werden's, Dell confessed to herself that never had the world seemed so drab. Serves you right, she railed inwardly, you knew you were playing with fire and you've been scorched good and proper.

Of course it was idiotic. After the hard road she had traveled ever since she could remember she wasn't going to sidestep the lap of luxury—the mayor's lap. Why, she'd won out in competition with practically every unattached female in town. The mayor might be short on "it," but there wasn't anything else he couldn't give his wife.

And he was okay at that. Look how decent he had acted in this Cash and Carry affair.

Thinking of the mayor, Dell believed herself imagining things when his voice broke into her cogitations. Then she realized that her table was next to the telephone booth and that the mayor was in there talking in a raised, insistent tone.

"Just do what I tell you, Benton. Even if that ordinance has been filed away so long, it's perfectly binding and it says no Sunday appearances in costume or make-up. I've looked into it thoroughly since I saw you. Simply tell him he can't show on Sunday. And be sure my name is kept out. What's that? I told you you wouldn't lose by it. That fellow's too damned insolent and I'm going to teach him a lesson."

Dell shrank back, almost holding her breath when the mayor emerged from the booth. But he strode out of the restaurant, looking neither to the left nor right.

For a full minute Dell sat like a stone image, her pink nails cutting into her palms.

Fair play! Oh!

Getting up she paid her check, not even hearing Mrs. Werden's pleasant "Ain't it a lovely day?" then walked rapidly toward the Barrickton Theater.

Cash was sitting at his dressing table in a daze, his head propped up in his hands. On the chair beside him lay his white satin *Pierrot* costume, with its big black velvet buttons, while Carry, sensing something wrong, crouched disconsolately at her master's feet.

The boy glanced up as Dell entered and smiled wryly. "Come to weep at my funeral?" he asked. Then he pushed back his thick black hair with a fierce gesture. "What's the use! A packed house and they rake up a mildewed ordinance and tell me I can't go on in costume. This will finish me with the agents. They'll say it's because my act is rotten. And," miserably, "I guess that's it."

"That isn't it," snapped Dell. "Cash, look up here. It's darn plain to me that you need a mother to guide you. Well—I'm her! Now, are you going to let them get away with this?"

Cash stared at her for a moment, then sprang to his feet. Placing his hands on her shoulders he held her away, and as he studied the pale little face with its angry scarlet mouth and flashing eyes, his own eyes narrowed and his jaw assumed a belligerent angle.

"Sit down, Angel," he said levelly, "I want to make talk with the manager."

He opened the dressing room door with a quiet grimness utterly unlike his usual boyish amiability.

"Hey, Benton," he called, "you still insist that I can't go on in costume?"

"That's the dope."

"All right, we go on as we are." There was a hard little click in his voice. "We're due in five minutes. You booked us and we're going to show."

"You can't go out there without make-up!" gasped the manager.

"I'd like to see you stop us," emphatically.

In the wings he bent down and patted his faithful teammate. "Come on, Carry," he whispered. "If we flop we'll at least flop fighting."

SO, instead of the expected "dumb act," there appeared a good-looking boy, who might have been a college senior, talking to a dog that was vibrant with canine charm.

A born trouper was Carry, and, although puzzled at this new procedure, she came through marvelously, doing her stuff as topmounter in their difficult feats and living up to her breed's reputation as "the humorist of the canine race" in the comical woof-woofs with which she responded to the extemporaneous commentary of droll remarks that fell from the lips of her partner. That commentary was nothing new to Carry—it was the everyday chatter with which her adored master regaled her behind the scenes.

"Come on, Carry," Cash prefaced one of their star tricks, "let's show 'em our Airplane Nosedive. Do your darndest, old girl. Remember, we've got a mamma to look after now and we'll have to please the customers to make money."

"I'm remembering," woofed Carry, while the audience roared.

There was something gallant about this performance that was felt rather than seen. Of course, the boy-and-dog friendship struck a never failing responsive note, but it went far deeper, that something, gripping the hearts of that thousand strong audience.

When the act finished they applauded vociferously; they stood up and cheered; they called the pair back for curtain after curtain.

"Why, honey," quavered Dell in the dressing room a few moments later, tears coursing down her cheeks, "you with that line and that voice doing pantomime!"

"Angel," Cash was panting but happy, "you *are* going to be our mamma now, aren't you?"

"Going to be!" with a tremulous laugh. "From now on, big boy, Cash 'n' Carry carry excess baggage."

"Excess, we welcome you." And Cash was saying it with kisses when a knock sounded and into the dressing room walked a fat, pudgy man, smoking a fat, pudgy cigar, which he removed to inquire:

"Booked for next week, son?"

Cash succeeded in looking nonchalant. "Not yet."

"Good. I was out front. Just happened in while my car was being doctored across the street. Come and see me at the Palmer House to-morrow."

After he had gone Cash stood staring down at the card in his hand, at a name that had always been to him almost a legend—a name that stood for Broadway revues and long contracts.

"Carry, we've done it," he murmured. Then he turned to Dell.

"Angel, didn't I say you were our mascot?"

"Cash, I don't deserve it! I was going to let love go. To sell myself for money—but Sunday morning I overheard the mayor giving orders to keep you from appearing, and—oh, Cash! I knew in that moment that the mayor wasn't the only one who wasn't playing fair!

"I—love you, Cash, oh, do you love me, too, *love* me?"

Cash's husky voice could only manage a very trembly "Angel!" as the auburn head and the dark one drew together for a long, long kiss.

"Woof-woof," approved Carry whole-heartedly.

Planets of Destiny

By CAROL YOUNG

BY the application of the scientific principles of astrology your questions will be answered in these pages. But the publishers of this magazine, and also the conductor of this department, do not hold themselves responsible for the accuracy of the replies, inasmuch as many readers furnish incorrect birth data and others do not know the hour of their birth. This department is conducted only for such help or interest as readers may obtain from it.

One question is allowed each reader. Question must be accompanied by coupon to be found at the back of the book. Please do not ask questions concerning death, speculation or the whereabouts of lost property.

It is very important that you give the following data: time of birth (hour of the day or night), date, month, year and place. Also sex.

No personal questions will be answered by direct mail, but if you will send ten cents in stamps to cover cost of mailing, All-Story will be glad to return to you a short estimate of your character and of the future influences for those in your Zodiacal sign, giving suggestions for at least the next two years.

DAILY ASTROLOGICAL GUIDE

For the Next Two Weeks

October 4—This is one of those days when the person who is in the habit of jumping to conclusions had best jump some other time; hold back; wait.

October 5—A most favorable day for the majority; be far sighted; make plans ahead; check up on finances; decide and act if sure you are right.

October 6—not a good day for making changes or for relations with those who are older than you are; a poor day for those of the feminine sex.

October 7—Another negative day for women; guard money matters; delay all unnecessary decisions, regardless of your sex; stay with the usual routine.

October 8—Excited and emotionally adverse till mid afternoon; slightly improved in the evening, but not good enough for anything important.

October 9—This looks considerably better, at least by comparison; but celestial vibrations are not strong enough and will fool the unwary.

October 10—The early morning and the evening are the best parts of this day; this is the first of four negative days in occupation and finances.

October 11—Nothing of great importance should be tried to-day; have a good time, but don't

be too serious in following the dictates of emotion.

October 12—Fairly good with the opposite sex; slightly favorable for minor finances, but negative for big deals or long term purchases.

October 13—One of those days when you are sure you're right till you find out different, which you probably will—best to hold back on decisions.

October 14—Routine the morning, getting the usual run of things taken care of; the afternoon and evening show improvement if you will be alert.

October 15—Enthusiastic, but headstrong and risky, in the morning; look carefully before leaping and then don't. The evening will be more pleasant.

October 16—Much better vibrations rule to-day, particularly afternoon; avoid temper, but proceed with new business if it looks profitable.

October 17—Too generally assorted are the rays from the planets to-day for anything definite or important; don't take chances; use car in social affairs.

ERROR

"It is almost as difficult to make a man unlearn his errors as his knowledge. Malinformation is more hopeless than non-information; for error is always more busy than ignorance. Ignorance is a blank sheet on which we may write; but error is a scribbled one from which we must first erase. Ignorance is contented to stand still with her back to the truth; but error is more presumptuous and proceeds in the wrong direction. Ignorance has no light, but error follows a false one."

Thus spake Colton.

"Our greatest glory is not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall," said Confucius, the great Chinese philosopher.

Those are excellent quotations, and I recommend that you commit them to memory, repeating them every day before starting out with your day's work. Better still, if you are seriously studying life's problems as they relate to yourself, sit down and write an essay of at least a thousand words on the subject of Error, applying the experiences you have had to the principles laid down by those great thinkers. If you will actually put your thoughts down in writing you will be surprised—they will show you new ideas and give you information as to what is going on inside you that you didn't know before. Now, don't just say to yourself, "That's a good idea," and then forget to do it. If you make that error, you need this more than those who have the ambition to do it.

If you merely think it a good thing to do, and figure that it is merely good for the other fellow to do, and that you could do it very well if you were to do it—and still you don't do it—do you know what is the matter with you? Do you know that this very tendency to let things slide is probably the reason why you haven't already got everything you want? I do.

In those quotations, and in my remarks so far, I have mentioned only half of it.

The other half is that you must not concentrate your thought on errors and mistakes alone. They are the horrible examples and when one allows his or her mind to dwell on nothing but negatives, the probabilities are that the negatives will be the things that materialize in the affairs of that person.

So make it your business, when you write your thousand words on this subject, to dwell more on the positive side—use your errors as a point of departure, as something to eliminate. Get away from them and show the benefits to be gained from the right sort of thought and from the right sort of action. Use illustrations from real life. Read the papers and note where errors have cost much; also note where a good deed or an accurate thought has brought reward. Add to these your own experiences. Write it up just as though it were going to be published in a newspaper feature article.

But even that will not be enough, if you are truly desirous of making yourself better. You must do more.

None of us is perfect, so, with my own numerous faults, I feel no hesitation in telling you that we can all do well to emulate the better things that good old Ben Franklin did to improve himself. Here was his method, as told by him in his autobiography:

He started out by putting down what he considered one of his weaknesses on a piece of paper. We'll say he began with Pride. The idea was that for seven days he would strive to avoid any feeling or display of pride. It was constantly on his mind for a week.

At the end of each day, on the paper where he had written "Pride," he would put down the number of times he had yielded. Each succeeding day, as he made more and more effort to correct his mistakes, the numbers got smaller and smaller. Soon, he had eliminated his errors of pride entirely; it had become subconscious action to keep such thoughts, acts and remarks away from him.

Then, the following week, he took up another, such as the mistake of being afraid of the future. Each week he killed a weakness. As he wrote it all up in later years he looked back on those days of struggle with himself as the big turning point in his career and he attributed much of his success to that method. I have tried it; and I heartily recommend it to all of my readers.

Don't try to fix everything all at once. Elimi-

nate one fault at a time; but eliminate it with everything you have in you—that is, by putting a virtue in its place. You will have nothing further to fear from that one.

MATRIMONY SERVICE

It seems that everybody, or pretty nearly everybody, wants to get married—in spite of the percentage that is apparently against everlasting joy just because of the wedding ceremony. Well, anyway, here I am trying to help.

As most of you know by this time, you send in your birth data and I answer as many as I can in each issue. I am not leaving any of you out, so wait patiently till your turn comes—it will appear if you have sent in your request.

The information I give you is the best time in the near future, just as soon as possible, when you can make a proper and correct decision on the matter of whether you should marry. I cannot say when you will marry; that is up to you. But, if you make your decision at the time I give as next best for you, you will know the right answer from within your own inner reactions to the problem.

Here they are for this time. First your initials, then your birthday, and then the best next time for you to decide on marriage.

C. S., April 10, 1913—February, 1936.
L. B., July 29, 1906—August, 1931.
K. P., August 7, 1907—September, 1931.
P. C., August 14, 1906—November, 1931.
V. G., March 20, 1889—July, 1931.
F. F. B., June 9, 1914—February, 1938.
L. H., October 12, 1887—December, 1933.
J. W. M., September 29, 1909—October, 1933.
D. L. K., October 1, 1911—October, 1933.
H. U., February 15, 1910—April, 1938.
M. W., September 10, 1914—March, 1941.
G. G. R., September 14, 1907—November, 1932.
C. P., August 30, 1912—December, 1936.
H. E. W., August 18, 1909—July, 1932.
H. E. G., February 8, 1913—April, 1938.
C. L. P., October 28, 1900—October, 1934.
J. B., April 20, 1915—November, 1936.
H. R., August 8, 1912—January, 1936.
McD. McC., October 10, 1914—August, 1941.
H. W. December 31, 1914—January, 1937.
H. L., September 17, 1913—March, 1937.
R. N. P., April 28, 1913—June, 1940.
L. S., June 24, 1912—October, 1934.
F. R., March 28, 1909—August, 1931.
N. V., December 25, 1908—August, 1932.
G. S., December 31, 1912—January, 1937.
E. I. G., October 17, 1912—September, 1934.
M. H. L., July, 11, 1885—October, 1930.
E. E., July 5, 1909—December, 1934.
P. C., July 10, 1910—January, 1935.
B. M. W., September 11, 1894—November, 1932.
A. G. D., December 31, 1911—January, 1937.
L. D., July 10, 1912—January, 1935.
E. J. M., March 28, 1910—August, 1931.
E. F. D., November 11, 1911—January, 1935.
E. T. B., October 2, 1888—October, 1933.
R. A. McC., November 15, 1909—June, 1931.
H. M. W., October 14, 1895—December, 1933.
M. M., February 26, 1900—February, 1939.
E. F. N., December 6, 1907—September, 1931.
C. W., July 27, 1894—July, 1931.
D. E. K., October 3, 1915—January, 1938.
R. T., Jr., September 13, 1909—November, 1932.
L. B., July 8, 1910—December, 1934.
L. R., June 9, 1909—December, 1933.
G. E. R., August 15, 1911—February, 1936.
B. L., October 15, 1908—January, 1934.
A. C. R., May 20, 1895—October, 1933.
T. F., December 25, 1909—September, 1932.
B. C. E., March 19, 1914—October, 1935.
M. E. S., February 25, 1911—November, 1934
L. H., July 26, 1909—July, 1931.
R. P., January 31, 1915—July, 1941.
Mrs. C. S., January 21, 1904—September, 1933.
K. Z., December 27, 1911—December, 1936.
N. M. M., March 28, 1909—August, 1931.
F. C., February 1, 1906—January, 1938.
L. F. S., August 8, 1910—September, 1931.
M. G., February 28, 1909—November, 1934.
M. M. E. E., February 22, 1908—October, 1934.
H. M. C., December 10, 1906—September, 1931.
A. C. M. B., July 13, 1897—January, 1935.
T. G., August 25, 1916—May, 1940.
C. S., May 22, 1894—September, 1933.
A. Y., March 19, 1911—October, 1935.
H. G., June 23, 1915—January, 1939.
H. A., September 15, 1888—December, 1932.
T. B., January 30, 1916—January, 1938.
R. E. C., November 21, 1909—July, 1931.
M. U., January 10, 1912—July, 1933.
M. B., July 6, 1913—December, 1934.
M. A., February 8, 1912—December, 1933.
F. M. B., February 20, 1888—October, 1934.
M. P., November 13, 1909—May, 1931.
E. von R., August 16, 1908—July, 1932.

Health bothers a great many—and the sad part of it is that illness is always based on some violation of the laws of Nature. So far, the best rules we have ever had are to be found in the Ten Commandments. If you are ailing, find out which of these great instructions you are violating and make the necessary changes so you will be in line with the great forces. You will then need no dope or instruction. For instance:

My guess is that T. P. McL., born January 29, 1899, has been yielding to a tendency to violate the first commandment with some form of intellectual pride and selfishness. Keep your mental

excellence, but don't forget the great Source of Supply from which you are borrowing it.

Envy and desire to possess something that belongs to another, whether it be a physical thing or a right of self-determination, might wisely be looked into by you, Mrs. K. K., born June 21, 1892.

Worry and fear to be eliminated, M. T. H., born February 9, 1911. You are probably making the mistake of thinking the things you fear cause the worry. The truth is that your fear causes the condition you would avoid.

Your throat will get well without removing your tonsils, Mrs. I. M. B. S., born November 23, 1898, but not unless you remove greed, envy and all maliciousness from your soul. If you were perfect, you wouldn't suffer.

Here's the right idea. "What should I do to improve my health?" asks O. A., born May 19, 1903. Most folks regard illness as something they can't help and don't even want to *do* anything about it. But when O. A. talks like that, she is on the way to happiness. False desires to be conquered here.

Vanity, laziness and false pride are a few of the things you could put on your Ben Franklin list, J. B., born October 10, 1886. Not that you don't put in your time and get all tired out—readjust your motives and cultivate a greater desire to serve your fellow man and woman.

Yes, M. K., born December 26, 1908, you are on the right track. Develop your knowledge of government and social work; avoid all personal emotionalism in your occupational line of duty.

A person born December 2, 1896, Mrs. C. C., should not attempt to deal direct with the public.

Neither should you, L. R., born July 7, 1911. Imagination and art seem to be your best lines. How about advertising? You could do well in it.

A good combination of faith to detail and sense of publicity are yours, R. F., born July 26, 1914; but look out for temper on your part.

BE SURE—

—to give *all* the information necessary when asking your question. Many readers make the mistake of giving "1930" as their year of birth and many others do not specify the hour of the day or night. These facts must be given before Carol Young can help you: year of birth, month, date, place and hour of the day or night. Also, remember that only one question is allowed each reader.

For coupon entitling you to Carol Young's services, turn to page 480

Handwriting and Happiness

By JOHN FRASER

JOHN FRASER, gifted handwriting expert, who has made a name for himself both in his native England and here in America, will analyze your handwriting. If you wish to know whether your sweetheart is the right man for you to marry, inclose samples of your own and your sweetheart's handwritings and address your letter to Mr. Fraser, care "Service for Sweethearts." If you wish his help in finding the profession for which you are best fitted, address him care "Your Career." For general reading, care "Character Analysis."

You may take advantage of one or any service, but a coupon must accompany each request for handwriting analysis. Coupon will be found at the back of the book.

Mr. Fraser bases his judgments on the scientific rules of graphology. In no case does he forecast the future or attempt to reveal the past. Scientific graphology undertakes only to reveal the inner secrets of your nature.

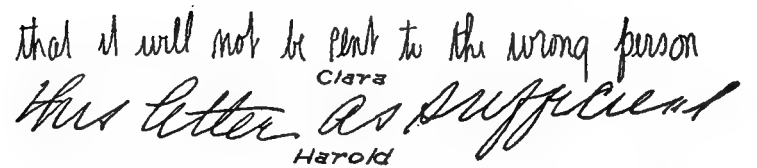
As many answers will be given on these pages as space permits. All other questions will be answered by mail. A stamped, addressed envelope must accompany your request for analysis.

IN the past few days, I have been asked many times by young men who are contemplating matrimony whether it's the husband's duty to look after the finances of the home, or if it should lie with the wife to disburse the weekly income. Of course, graphology can't answer this, but my personal feeling is that it is entirely a matter of whether the one or the other is the better manager.

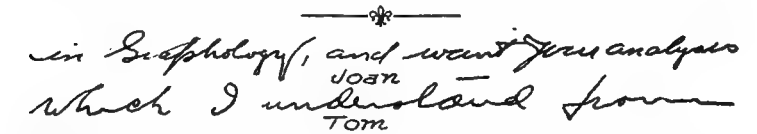
I think it behooves the girl to take a hand in this matter, since the husband has usually enough to do in the making of it. If the young wife has the real interests of her home at heart, nothing should give her more pleasure than to see the family budget properly handled.

A certain young man asked his bride on the eve of the wedding what executive position she would prefer to have in their new household after the honeymoon was over. President, or vice-president? She told him she would be glad to hold down a minor position in the new "company"—that of treasurer. I think that young lady was wise beyond her years, and knew what she was talking about. I would give the same advice to every young married couple confronting that most difficult question: money.

SERVICE FOR SWEETHEARTS



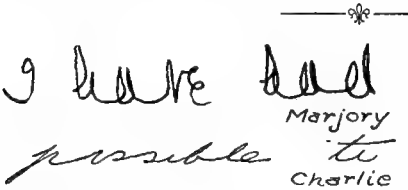
(Miss Clara B., Fargo, N. D.) I see at once that you have fallen in love with a real he-man. To say that Harold is affectionate is to put it mildly. He is more than that, he is romantic and very emotional. A man of pep, power, and passion. You, on the other hand, are rather quiet and reserved, and inclined to be spiritually-minded. There are several things in your two natures which are not altogether compatible, but with a little tact and diplomacy on your part, you could get Harold to see your way and do your bidding. Your fiancé has many strong characteristics which you would be the better to know about before you go to the altar with him. For example, he has a very strong will and a worse temper. He requires no one to make up his mind for him. He listens to the say-so of no one. He is impatient, and so obstinate at times as to be actually pig-headed. Looking for his good qualities, I discover that he is well educated. He is liberal-minded and generous with his money. He is accustomed to the better things of life and would always insist on having the best of everything. As I have already said, Clara, with a little bit of careful handling, Harold would make a very fine husband.



(Miss Joan L., Salem, Ore.) Your trials and tribulations with your sweetheart Tom are not at all surprising to me after giving his handwriting the "once over." I'm afraid, Joan, your choice of a lover has not been very happy, judging by what I see in his pen strokes. He is a man who has not your real interests at heart. He is too unstable and vacillating in his affections. He is a fellow who will fall down and worship you one day and pass you on the street the next time he meets you. He is also vindictive and revengeful. More than that, he is really jealous and possesses a nasty temper. How you two ever came to like each other is beyond me. I see nothing in common between you at all. I have to confess I see signs of vacillation in your own nature. You evidently soon get tired of things, and this may apply to love as well as anything else. Furthermore, you are very frugal and could be stingy very easily, if you wanted to be, while your fiancé is the very opposite. Money actually burns a hole in his pocket, and as a result he would be always "broke." My advice to you, Joan, is wait another year at least and get a better "line" on Tom before you consent to become his wife.

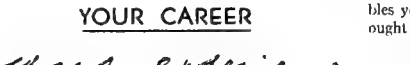
(Miss Fannie W., Bayonne, N. J.) I would call you two love-birds. I was glad to see that "you were very fond of each other," but not a bit surprised. You evidently are both very sentimental; Walter is the more forceful of the two. He is a man who has an aim in life and is determined to get there. If the truth were told he is somewhat too aggressive in his manner. I can

very well understand why he is well liked and popular with the girls, as you mentioned in your letter. He has personality and push. He also has a wee bit of a flirtatious nature which explains why he prefers the company of women to that of men. I like your characteristics very much. You are sober-minded and conscientious. You are a very constructive thinker and a first-class reasoner. You are not built in the same way as Walter. He is of the motive type while you are of the mental order. You would be all the better for a little more vitality. As to being well matched, I would say you were excellently suited to each other, and ought to be real happy in each other's company long after the honeymoon is over.

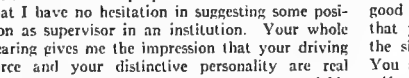


(Miss Marjory E., Duluth, Minn.) I don't wonder that your sweetheart is puzzled about your temperamental ways, as you mentioned to me in your letter. I would wonder myself, if I were in his shoes. That you are of the stuff that successes are made from, goes without saying. I m sure you are capable of making a name for yourself without the help of any man. Whether you have met the right man or not, I'm not prepared to say. I see many discrepancies in your two natures which are not compatible with real happiness in matrimony. You are first and last an artist, whose work is nine-tenths of your whole existence. You live for your art, and with your mind constantly on that one thing is it possible to give much time to sentimental things? On the other hand, your boy friend is a man who is quick and emotional and everything but an artist like yourself. He never knew what it was to be carried away on the "wings of imagination," nor to feel the urge to express his feelings on canvas or on paper. He is more prosaic, and as such he will always remain at some distance from you in ideas and aspirations. So I'm sorry to say I cannot give you definite encouragement for marriage.

YOUR CAREER



(Miss Beatrice McC., Carthage, Miss.) You are a girl with a broad outlook on life and a finely poised mind. Nothing is too difficult for you to tackle. You have the perseverant spirit of a winner, and the determination of a person who commands attention by aggressiveness. You have leadership qualities to such an extent that I have no hesitation in suggesting some position as supervisor in an institution. Your whole bearing gives me the impression that your driving force and your distinctive personality are real assets. Though you have many commendable traits, you also have one or two which are not so good. For example, your temper is not improving with age. You are also impulsive and impatient. There must be no waiting with Beatrice. Everything must be done at once, otherwise there is going to be trouble in the house. You require no one to think for you, nor do you listen to the say-so of others. Despite these feminine foibles you have a good head on your shoulders and ought to do well in some executive position.



(Miss Sophie A., Halifax, N. S.) You impress me as being a girl who is fond of work which requires constant and minute attention. You are evidently cautious and reserved. You take time to consider things, and, in my opinion, would be over-conscientious in your work. Since you are a good mixer and like company I should imagine that you might be very successful in caring for the sick. Nursing appeals to you, does it not? You are the essence of patience, and as far as self-control is concerned, it is written all over your script. Whether you would ever be a leader in your profession, I hesitate to say. You have considerable business ability and a faculty for carrying things through to a finish. Among your negative characteristics I observe that you are given to talking quite a lot. This "gift of the gab" is more detrimental than helpful to you. Though you are able to keep secrets all right, on

the other hand, you lose out by your loquacity in other ways. As to a career, nursing is your forte.

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

You are doing the wrong

(Miss Violet W. McP., Plymouth, Mass.) You are a humble-minded sort of girl and have all the unassuming qualities of the little flower which you are named after. You believe in doing your bit in your own quiet way, and would be always content to let the rest of the world go by. Your imaginative power is not so good as it might be, which clearly shows me that you are not cut out for a writer of stories. This is counterbalanced, however, by a rather strong will power. I fail to see any real ambition in your make-up. You are not at all of the aspiring type. You haven't much desire to get on in the world. This is a pity, since you are still young and healthy. The man or woman who slumps at your age—twenty-two—and is doing nothing in the matter of mental improvement, is on the high road to Needham. You should never forget that the three grand essentials to success and happiness in this world are: something to do, some one to love, and something to hope for. You would do well to sit down and figure it out for yourself, and in the coming winter try a little self-improvement.

For the coupon entitling you to John Fraser's services, turn to page 480

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THE EDITORS,
ALL-STORY MAGAZINE,
280 Broadway, New York City.

Here is my opinion of the stories in this issue:

The Shadow of the Past.....

Twin Hearts .....

Cast Aside .....

Love's Marathon .....

Too Slow for Fast Company.....

The Wishing Tree.....

A Silent Altar.....

Love to the Rescue.....

Cash 'n' Carry .....

My favorite authors are .....

Name .....

Address .....

(Name and address may be omitted, if desired)

Heart-to-Heart

Tell Your Love Troubles to

AGNES
MERION
MORTON

MRS. MORTON wants you to feel that she is a friend—some one to whom it is a comfort to tell your problems, who will advise and encourage you in your struggle for happiness, and who is always here to help. She is interested in you. Write to her freely, addressing your letter care All-Story Magazine, 280 Broadway, N. Y. C.

Every letter is confidential.

As Mrs. Morton receives so many letters, she cannot publish answers to all in the space allotted to her. Some, therefore, are answered by mail. Be sure to inclose a stamped, addressed envelope with your question.

DEAR MRS. MORTON:

I can surely sympathize with Kala Straus, let me say, from the depths of my heart. I didn't read her letter, but I happened upon those from "A Sympathizer" and "City Institution Housekeeper." May I tell my story and hope I find some one who can sympathize. So far, I've had no sympathy.

He was Jewish. I shall call him Jerry. I am Protestant. Jerry was very good-looking and we were very good friends before we fell in love with each other. We knew what we wanted and were determined to get it—happiness. For almost a year we loved. In the meantime, we both dated other fellows and girls. Jerry used to say, "We're having our chance to find some one else—if it isn't real love." But it was real.

Then in late February a year ago he went away. He didn't write. In April he came to see me—met me, rather, for my parents were unaware. He told me he still cared. I shall always remember Jerry as I last saw him. I wanted him, terribly. I wrote and told him to come, but he didn't. I began to lose sleep, began to worry—doubt, at last. In July, to be exact the seventeenth, I went to another State. On the twenty-third I received word from a friend that Jerry had been killed in an auto crash. My whole world seemed to crash. I didn't go back for the funeral. How could I bear to see him dead? I think it was this February that the pain began to cease. I began to realize he was really gone.

I saw his cousin afterward. May I repeat his words to me? He said, "Betty, Jerry loved you. The night before he was killed he spoke of you and his caring so utterly. He was afraid to see you again because he knew it meant just one thing—marriage. Jerry saw two sides of it—his family and yours. There were so many responsibilities, and his mother to remember. So death was easier." I asked him then if it had been accidental death or suicide. He didn't look at me as he replied, "I'm sure it was accidental." Somehow I didn't like the way he said it—it didn't ring true.

That was the end, Mrs. Morton. No one can ever know how we loved each other, how we wanted each other. I realize now how many lives would have been wrecked, whereas it is only mine now that is wasted. Perhaps it is best, after all. Don't say he was a coward; he wasn't. It was just that we couldn't do without each

other—and to be married risked every one else's happiness. Had we another chance I'm sure we would have done the same. Of course they miss him, but not so much as I. It isn't possible.

Kala Straus is foolish to let her life be ruined by others. What can you gain? I haven't anything—just knowing I saved others unhappiness. But don't you think parents can forgive later? If they love you enough they can and will. What matters if you really love him and can be happy? It's the most glorious thing on earth and I can't have it—it's useless to try to love again as I loved Jerry. I've tried and failed, but I'm making the best of it. I haven't been to his grave once, and it's over a year now. But if I go it will only reopen the wound and intensify the pain.

Oh, Kala, why not take a chance at happiness? If you fail you won't be any worse off than I.

STILL CARING.

No, I would never call Jerry a coward, Still Caring, but I don't like to think that his death was not an accident. Do you suppose it would ever occur to a boy who loved his mother enough to sacrifice his happiness for her sake, that she would rather know him dead than married to a girl she would not have chosen? He must have known that in a year or two, if you had made him happy, his mother and the others would have become reconciled; only death is hopeless.

Intermarriage is a handicap, to be sure. Two young people who have been brought up with totally different backgrounds do have to care for each other more than those whose training has been along similar lines. No marriage should be entered into lightly, and a mixed marriage should be considered the most seriously of all. But there is no one rule that can be laid down for every case. David Rothstein's letter showed us that. And the world is getting broader-minded all the time, so the "middle wall of partition" must gradually become less impenetrable.

As for you, Still Caring, it is too soon yet to love another man. We must have time to lay away our dead. But you must not say your life is "wasted." It will not always be as hard as it is at first. Jerry will always be young, but you will go on and become a mature woman. Your loss itself will develop and change you, and there is no reason to think you will not find a mate for your maturity even as he seemed to be the mate of your youth. Don't *nourish* your grief, that's all; don't invite it; push it away with other things. It will, in time, be only a memory, and not a bitter one.

And now I have a message from Kala for all of you. She thanks everybody for the kindness and interest shown, and is sorry she cannot answer every letter personally. She has "taken the risk" and married her Catholic boy. To their own surprise, there is one parent in each family who stood by them and there is every hope that the others will relent sooner or later. In her case, the two young people are ideally suited to each other in tastes and temperament; their love has stood the acid test of five years' probation, including two of complete absence. It is too early yet to know that they have made a "success" of marriage, but they have at least as much chance as the average, and I personally have no doubt that they will.

DEAR MRS. MORTON:

I'm a young girl of seventeen summers, and they have every one been happy ones until the last one. Oh, I've been happy, too, but a little worry mixed in it. I graduated from high last June, and came here to take a business course. The three months are almost up now. In my class was a boy who imagines himself in love with me. He gave me his class ring and asked me to wear it for an engagement ring until he could get a job and get me another. I told him I would wear it, but I was not thinking of getting engaged. Young boys of that kind are the only ones I have ever gone with until I came here. In the house where I board there is living a young man of twenty-seven. I've dated him several times, and he has lots more sense.

At first we used to drive every night with other people; then he began to take me out alone. The first time we drove over to a town twenty miles away and went to a show, and on the way back he told me how sweet he thought I was and asked me to kiss him. I knew he had a girl in St. Louis, so I did not do it. He asked me if I didn't love him enough, and I told him yes, I loved him, but there was some one else who maybe felt the same way, and I did not want to cause any unhappiness. He told me that he did not love any one but myself. Oh, I was so happy. He is kind and thoughtful in every way. Then some of his boy friends told me he had told them he is engaged to this girl in St. Louis.

But, Mrs. Morton, last week-end he told his cousin, who is a good friend of mine, that he was going to St. Louis. Then he came and told me he was going to Chicago on business. His cousin found his raincoat in the car, and in the pocket was a letter he had received from the girl asking him when he was coming to see her again. He told me good-by on Friday night and I just could not help it; he kissed me and I was glad. I tried to say no, but I love him so much. He went on his trip, came back yesterday, and last night he took me out riding again and told me how much he missed me and that if he hadn't already planned the trip he would never have taken it. He again asked me to kiss him, but I did not do it, and won't until I know just where he went and how he feels about this girl.

Mrs. Morton, how can I find out whether he is telling me the truth? I am going home soon now—my father has got me a job in a friend's office—and I want to know before I go just how I stand. Can you help me, please? I gave him the boy's ring to wear in exchange for one of his, but of course I will get it back before I leave.

TROUBLED JUDY.

Judy, I have no touchstone with which you may test this young man's faithfulness. Only

time can prove that. But, dear little girl, you are very young to be seriously in love. Of course this man is more interesting than the boys in school and has had more experience and all that. But you must remember that he is more interesting just *because* he has had that much more experience, knows how to play the game of love from practice; he has learned all the little tricks and pretty speeches. Also, he has probably acquired the idea that one need not be sincere with girls.

If just one other person had told you he was engaged, I might think it was because of jealousy, or a mistake. But if several people were given that impression by him, it looks as if it may be true. Now whether he had been merely playing around with the other girl, or had really engaged himself to her, he evidently is not averse to consoling himself in her absence. What he says sounds very much to an older person like "kidding," like a good "line." Your safest course, whether he is sincere with you or not, would be to pretend that you have been just "kidding," too. It is hard for such a young girl as yourself to exercise wisdom and self-control, but the harder it is the more you should try to do it. He told you and his cousin different stories—that is one definite thing against him. It was not right to read his letter, of course, even if he did leave it carelessly about, but the evidence of that shows something. Besides, people do not usually go away over the week-end "on business," either to Chicago or anywhere else.

One thing I would never do again, Judy, if I were you, is to give one man something another had given you, nor even lend it to him. No matter if you do not love the other boy, he cares for you and trusted you with his ring. It would hurt him horribly to learn you had let another fellow wear it, and besides, it cheapens you in the older man's eyes.

When you get back home, and have the interest of the new job, and are with your old friends again, you will gradually learn to see his affair in a different light. It won't be so close to you, so you will be able to look at it with clearer eyes. I hope and believe that you will learn this man does not mean to you what you now think he means. But, Judy, if by any chance he is sincere with you it will not hurt either of you for you to keep your head now and not make him sure that you really care. They don't like a dose of their own medicine, Judy! A man who tries to fool a girl is the first to complain if he finds out that she was a "wise one," too—the first to talk about the fickleness of women! Don't make him sure, Judy, that you are his for the asking. Let him wonder. It will be your safeguard.

DEAR MRS. MORTON:

I am nineteen and about four months ago I was introduced to a man with whom I fell immediately in love. We started going together and have ever since. But after a while I happened to find out something. He had been lying to me about his work, and he had told me he'd never been married, and other things. He was married twice—I've had proof of it—and divorced from his first wife and his second one is getting a divorce now. He told me that he had been engaged once and his girl had been killed in a wreck, and since then he had never liked any one until he saw me. When I told him I had found out about his being married he said it was his first wife that had died, and he hadn't told me about her nor about the second for fear I wouldn't go with him. He wrote me a wonderful letter and apologized for it all, and said it was only because he loved me so much he had told me such stories. He promised from the bottom of his heart that he would never lie to me again. He promised he would tell me the truth no matter how bad it is. Could you love a man after he had done that?

I wish you would please advise me what to do and how to test his love—to see if he really cares for me as much as he says he does. I love him, Mrs. Morton, and no one else can ever take his place. Oh, I know he loves me! Please answer soon—I'll appreciate it.

An unhappy girl,

VERA V. V.

Nineteen is pretty young to know that "no one else can ever take his place." I hope that some one else some day will make a much better place for himself in your affections, and deserve it much more. Vera, it is so important to be able to trust the word of the person we love and spend our life with! In fact, I'm not sure that it isn't the most important requisite of all.

Now, if this man had been honest with you; if he had told the truth from the beginning, you might be able to trust him, and to feel that he is worthy of your love. But the fact that he lied proves that he knows himself to have been in the wrong. He has no real defense for his two failures at marriage, and that is why he did not offer any. In studying the rules of Logic we learn that when the same thing happens twice, and the same cause is present both times, the chances are that that cause was responsible for the thing that happened. He has been unhappily married twice; it is more than likely that he was to blame for at least a good share of the unhappiness. The very best you can say of him is that he is a very poor judge of women, and very likely to be mistaken in his own feelings.

If I were you I'd try separation from a man like that. Test out both yourself and him. Don't have anything to do with him for a year or so, and meanwhile go out with all the nice boys you can—boys who aren't second-hand—no, third-hand. See if you feel the same about him at the end of that time, and if he is still waiting. I lay no claims to the gift of prophecy, but hardly expect you to find him waiting. No, Vera, you deserve somebody better than he appears from

this distance, anyway. Why, your very name means "truth"!

DEAR MRS. MORTON:

I am so unhappy I don't know what to do; sometimes it seems to me that I just can't keep on going. I was unhappily married when very young, divorced at nineteen and left with a baby to bring up. She died this last spring. Now about a year and half ago a young man came to the office where I worked. He was about thirty (I am twenty-five) and very quiet. Nice-looking, and very good manners and all that. He never mingled with the rest of the fellows much, and hardly spoke to the girls, but everybody liked him.

We were thrown together a great deal in our work, and somehow or other began to get acquainted more intimately than he did with the others. I told my aunt about him (she was taking care of my little girl at that time and I boarded with her) and she said why didn't I ask him to come out to the house for Sunday dinner. I did, and he made some excuse. At first I was angry, but he was just as friendly as ever in the office, would often stop by my desk when we weren't rushed, and talk about other things than business, and finally I asked him again. That time he came and my aunt and uncle both liked him. He was lovely with my little Nedda—got down on the floor and built blocks for her, and let her knock them down, and then built them up again. She was crazy about him, too, and embarrassed me to death by calling him "daddy." She had just started kindergarten and found out that most children have daddies, and began to plague me to tell her why she didn't have one.

Well, after that he would come out, although he never asked to come. It was always in response to a special invitation, and my aunt called him several times only to be refused. I did not mean to "chase" him, but it might have looked that way. Anyway, there was a kind of shyness about him. He never made bold the way other men do—Mrs. Morton, it is terrible for a young woman who has been divorced. Every man you meet seems to think you're a bad woman. But Hal never did.

At last I began to know he meant a great deal more to me than I seemed to mean to him. I began to be very unhappy because he had never shown he loved me, or even thought seriously of me. My aunt knew it, for I could not hide the fact that I was miserable from any one who knew me so well. Then Neddie died. It was diphtheria. I didn't know that in this day of serums and all the wonderful discoveries they let little children die of that any more. But the doctor was a young man and did not recognize it right away. The third day they came and took her to the hospital. I went to work because I could not bear to stay home and think. They called me and told me to come right away, but she was dead before I got there.

Hal took me to the hospital and took me home after I found it was too late. He was wonderful—made all the arrangements for the funeral, kept people away, helped in all the ways any one could have helped. I was home for a week, and he came every night and took me riding—he had a little car by that time—and he was so kind and sympathetic and understanding it seemed almost as if he must have known what it is to lose a child himself. I even thought once or twice that he could console me for losing her, if anything on earth could. Perhaps that was a dreadful thing to think of, but he certainly made it easier to bear.

Then one night, just before I was going back to work, he told me he had resigned from his job and got another far away. I went all to pieces. I'd been through so much I just couldn't stand any more, and I broke down and cried and told him I couldn't bear it. Then he took me in his arms and told me why he could never marry. He is an ex-convict, Mrs. Morton.

It's almost ten years ago now, but he served two years in State prison for theft. It would have been longer, but he had one influential friend who got him reprieved. I asked him if he was guilty and he said yes. He did not make any excuses, nor tell me the details, and I did not ask him. He said the friend had got him a job when he came out, and he had moved three or four times in the years since, for sooner or later people find out about him. I said, "Has anybody found out this time?" And he said, "No. I am going for a different reason." He said he'd never meant to love a woman, nor try to get one to love him, but he had started to love me before he knew it. But he thought I could forget my "friendship" for him if he only went away. I begged him not to go, I said I would marry him anyway, and he said I didn't know how it would be. He is made to feel sometimes almost like a fugitive from the law. He said, "They don't sentence you for five or ten years. They sentence you for life, and sometimes I wonder what I've got to live for." I said, "You've got me to live for, and I can't live without you." But he said it was only because I was so broken up over my baby's death. He said, "Your aunt is a good woman, but can you imagine what she would say if she knew this about me?"

And it is true, Mrs. Morton. I don't believe she would ever let either one of us across her threshold again. He went away, and the head of our firm got him a job in another town through a cousin who is in the same business. I was a wreck, of course, but people thought it was on account of the baby. There's hardly any one who knows. Of course, if it hadn't been for the terrible missing her, I'd not have suffered so much, but if he had been here to help me bear it I could have recovered sooner from losing her, too. Or learned to accept it better. I wrote to him two or three times, but he did not answer.

Then the man who took his place had fallen down on the job, and I went to our office manager and asked him if he thought he could get Hal to come back. I said, "We all liked him so much, and he got along with everybody so well." Personality does count in business. He said Hal went because he wanted to go—nobody asked him. But he would ask him to come back, so he did. Hal has written me and said he has to leave the place where he is now anyway because they are closing down, but "you

know," he said, "that if I come back I won't have the courage to leave you again. It is up to you this time."

What shall I do? I love him and want him more than anybody in the world. I feel that I know a little about men, having been married to one. Although at that I'm not sure it is fair to the others to call my husband a man. Anyway, Hal isn't like him. You know a man pretty well if you work with him every day for a year, and see him under all sorts of strain and care. He has a very kind, helpful disposition. He told me once that he would never do anything like what he did again, for it doesn't pay. But he said that made no difference to the world—as soon as they know they shun you, and sooner or later some one turns up who knows and tells. He said he had no right to ask a woman to share with him what he has been made to go through. All this he said, yet now he will come back and marry me if I tell him to come.

It does not bother me much now. I want him so much that I would go and live in a prison with him if they'd let me. But he says that is because I don't know what it will mean. He says the time may even come when he is not able to get a job. The old judge who has always helped him before is getting old, and when times are hard like now even men with clean records are out of work. He says it won't be much fun for me to have my friends and acquaintances snubbing me or, what is worse, being condescending to me. What do you think? Do you know any happy marriages contracted under such conditions? I have written him to tell him that I am putting it up to you. CHILDLESS.

My dear friend, it is not fair of you to put the decision up to any one else, for how a case will work out depends on things no stranger can possibly calculate. In one case, you might marry a man who would make you very happy, in spite of such an experience in his past. In another, you might be miserable together. It depends more on your character and his than on outside conditions.

Are you the kind of woman who broods on things that cannot be helped, who is always stirring up sleeping dogs, who invites trouble? Is he morbid and gloomy about the situation—with a pessimistic and hopeless view of things? If you can say no to both questions, then I believe there is every chance for your happiness. In many ways you know he is worthy of love and trust—far more worthy than most of the men you have met. He is fundamentally decent, fundamentally honest, too, for he might have married you without telling you anything about his prison record. Or he might have lied and said he was innocent—they almost always claim that. The fact that he has been honest with you weighs a great deal in his favor.

You need not ever tell anybody about this circumstance of his youth. It is no concern of theirs. And if he builds up a good reputation for himself now, has a good name with his business associates, and the respect of his employer, the worth-while friends, the real ones, people who are broad-minded or have had any experience of the world, any understanding of the human heart, will stand by him even when the story comes out—if it ever does.

He must have many sterling qualities or his friend "the judge" would not help him so determinedly. Does it not seem to you that it would be better, when the story comes out, unless he is actually discharged by his employer, for him to stay and face the thing through—live it down? Hard as it may be at first, it is the only way in which he can acquire any sort of permanency either in his business or home life. I would urge this course upon him, if I were you—and I hope you will decide you care enough to help him follow it.

I am sorry I cannot tell you from a case right under my eyes that it is possible for two people to be happy together, even when the man has a history like this. It has never happened to come across my desk before. But there is nothing in the fact itself that need spoil your marriage; only in your personal reactions to it. The past is dead. Can you bury it? If you love each other enough, you can make up to him—and he to you—for everything.

DEAR MRS. MORTON:

I always read your Heart-to-Heart section in the ALL-STORY and have often thought of writing and asking you what to do.

I am nineteen years old and go with a boy twenty-one. I've gone with him about two months and have learned to care a lot for him. We were together every night until he moved away about two weeks ago, and now I only see him two or three times a week. He seemed so anxious to go with me, and just when I began liking him he seemed to turn. He still likes me, I believe, but he's afraid I'll make a fool of him the way another girl did once before. He's had a few affairs before, and so have I, so in that respect we're in the same boat.

I've always imagined a little home and a sweet husband like him, but I guess I can't have him. He's the nicest boy I've ever gone with and treats me so well. We've often talked of marriage and little babies and he seems enthusiastic, but I can't seem to get his exact feelings about me. He holds a good position—plenty to keep a wife—but he just seems to be afraid to take the final step. I'm not rich or anything like that and don't have real nice clothes—however, I'm always presentable and I try to be awfully clean and neat.

I think more of him than any one I've ever met before, and he certainly treats me nicer. We are about the same height—he has dark wavy hair and blue eyes while I have blond hair and brown eyes. People tell us we're just an ideal couple—we seem that to the public, but to me there's something lacking and it hurts like everything. Could it be my clothes? I would do almost anything for some one I like—maybe I'm too good. But he's so good to me in return that I can't be mean or hateful. Another thing—he knows I'm jealous and sometimes does things in front of me to make me angry. Sometimes

I think I'll quit seeing him and just try to forget, but that would be awfully hard to do when you care for some one. Mrs. Morton, please tell me what to do. LITTLE LOST FRIEND.

Two months is a very short time to have known a young man, and run through such a gamut of hope, despair, and other emotions as you seem to have experienced. You are both so young that there isn't any possible hurry. It is a very short space of time, indeed, to be so sure that you have found the person with whom you want to spend the whole rest of your life. Do you *know* that you and he are absolutely congenial, in the ways in which it is so vital for married people to be congenial?

It is always a great pity for a man barely of age to marry—a pity for both himself and his young wife. It handicaps him too much—he cannot advance nor take chances as a single man could, if he is responsible for the support of a family. I'd advise you to wait two or three years even if you were engaged.

You tell me nothing of your own circumstances—whether, that is, you are working or living at home. I want you to carve out an independent life for yourself, without thinking of marriage yet a while. I want you to think what you would do if you had no marriage to look forward to—if you had to get pretty clothes and all that goes with them for yourself. Have you any personal ambition, dear? I hope so, and that you will take steps to attain it. Train yourself, or study your work so well that you will advance in it. Try to concentrate on *your own life*, and not think you must look to a man to take care of you. In the end, whatever happens, you will be better off, for you will have more inner resources.

But meanwhile, of course, you want your friend, and I think the way to keep him is not to be too serious with him, not to let him know you are just waiting for him to say the word. Also, even if you feel jealousy, never, never show him that you do. Men don't like women who are "unreasonable," as they call it. Act indifferent, no matter what he does to hurt you. Let him wonder a little just what you are thinking behind those pretty eyes of yours, just what is going on under that blond hair. Don't be too transparent. And the thing that will help you most—the wholesome and best thing—is work of your own in which you can be interested and in which you can grow and develop—you, yourself, as an individual. Marriage is the happiest thing for a woman, yes, but not just for the sake of getting married. And when we are very young we are often mistaken in our feelings—they seem so deep and lasting; then we grow up and realize that we have changed, and the person we thought was so wonderful no longer satisfies us at all. You need a much longer time of probation than two months, Mary, to be so positive that your happiness is all bound up in this one boy. Make haste slowly, be patient, let time prove whether this is the real thing or not.

Wretched Pam—You say you want a "career," but just what sort of career? Do you mean a career as a working girl, or on the stage, or what? There are so many kinds, but you will have to choose the one for which you are suited by nature and education. Until you are of age it would be both foolish and dangerous to think of leaving home, for however unsatisfactory it may be you are better off there than you would be anywhere else. A girl needs as much equipment as she can possibly have if she is to fight the world alone and unprotected in a strange town. All the experience, training, theory and practice you can get will be none too much if you are to succeed. Try to be patient a little longer, to please your parents as much as you can, and meanwhile, if you have a talent, develop it. Write me more about your career, if you care to, but don't, don't get married just because you have the chance. Your sister was lucky. Not one woman in ten who marries without loving a man learns to love him after the ceremony.

Bitter Dregs—I wish you would write again and give me permission to publish your letter. I could change some of the circumstances so that it would never be recognized. We are going to make a new departure soon and discuss the subject in these columns.

Hazel Eyes—It isn't "bad" to smoke. There may have been a time when only fast women smoked, but that is not true any longer. I wouldn't worry about it if I were you. The real objection to smoking is that, if indulged in excessively, it is injurious to the health, especially in the case of a very young girl—or boy, either.

The Lonesome Club

Conducted by DOROTHEA DALE

MAKE friends! Join the Lonesome Club and soon you will be getting more letters than any one you know.

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If you wish to communicate with the pals whose letters appear here, inclose your letter in a plain, stamped envelope and send it to Mrs. Dale. No letters will be forwarded without the extra stamp.

If you are a girl, you may write to other girls; if a man, to other men.

Please do not ask for the address of any one.

DEAR MRS. DALE:

I am a girl of sixteen and very lonesome, as I just came from the Sunshine State. I have blond hair and blue eyes. I love all sports, especially swimming and tennis, and I love to write. I am five feet four. MATILDA OF THE BRONX.

I'm a lonesome girl of fifteen, five feet tall and weigh 110. I have black hair (wind-blown bob) and dark brown eyes. I have just moved to New York from the sunny South, and haven't many friends. I love most sports, especially swimming.

LONESOME DOT, NEW YORK.

May I add my name to your Lonesome Club? I am a lonely ranch girl, and to all who care to hear I can tell about rodeos, round-ups, broncs, coyotes, cowboy legends, poems and songs, besides the Black Hills and Bad Lands. I'd like pen pals from every country and State. I am twenty-two, and often called a "dish-water blonde." To prove it's not as bad as it sounds, I will exchange snapshots with those who care to write. SMILES OF S. DAKOTA.

Hear ye! Hear ye! Let it be known that the below-mentioned individual of the philogenetic species, and of the male sex desires to communicate to the congenial species of this and other countries. I hope I don't have to coerce you—you, and that one over there to drop me a line or two, or maybe eighteen pages, of your own free will. The man behind the pen is a jolly old chap of twenty-one summers past—not present—athletically inclined, being on the city's champion swimming team. Was champ of the seventy-five yard free style. Can perform wonders on the gymnastic apparatus. Yeh—every time I do anything on them everybody wonders what I'm trying to do. My mind leads toward the aesthetic, and I dabble with paints, sketch, and sculpture. During my joyful moments I make death masks, and even though I am a cut-up, I don't intend to be a mortician. Send a snapshot of yourself, because I still revel at the sight of a pretty picture, and you wouldn't curtail my only blissful moments, would you? I will send my image only upon request, and I request that you don't request. I like the girls, God bless them.

RUSTY AL.

I am a young man, nineteen, five feet ten, and weigh 155. I am a graduate of Pasadena high school, and have indulged in sports there.

SANDY.

I want a rush order of pen pals, as I am too lonesome for words. I am sixteen, five feet to the minute, and weigh 92. I have brown hair and eyes, and am considered nice-looking. I love

swimming, dancing and all sports, and I'm full of pep! Am a junior in high school and love school. (You bet I do!) JUST COOKIE.

I am a Southern girl now living in the North, of high school age, quite tall, with brown hair and bluish-gray eyes. Won't some one please write to lonesome PAT OF MASS.

I wonder if there's any one willing to write to a girl who has all the fun in the world but still is lonesome. I'm rather attractive, popular, always on the go—have snappy comebacks for all your wisecracks. Try me and see! Oh, yes, I'm a brunette, almost nineteen. Don't forget, girls from New York write especially—others also desired. EVELYN OF LONG ISLAND.

I am sixteen, light brown hair, dark blue-gray eyes, stand five feet seven, and weigh 125. Am in high school and will graduate next June. Not so bad-looking, and as you know most Californians have a golden-brown complexion. Will talk about anything just so you'll write. I am the oldest of five girls. Don't laugh because I have so many sisters and should not be lonely and I am not of their company. But I want lots of friends and pen pals. I have written to one girl in South Dakota for three years and never have seen her. It's great fun. We got acquainted through a geography teacher both of us knew; I'd be tickled pink if I could get many more pals like Virginia. Come on, everybody; let's get acquainted. I'll tell you all about the good old Pacific. MILLIE.

A girl twenty-three (although I don't look or feel that old), dark brown hair, blue eyes and clear complexion. I love to read, write and draw, and intend to be an artist some day if my dreams come true. I would love to hear from pen pals all over the world, young or old.

A DREAMER.

A young fellow twenty-six, stand five feet eight, auburn hair, brown eyes, and naturally freckles go with it. Was born and raised in the city, but on account of my mother's health am now living in the country and very lonesome at times. I am a great lover of fishing and baseball. Also love music, myself I play the piano and guitar. Here's hoping you will be able to find a pen pal for me. ALBERT.

Just another lonely brunette of fourteen who would like to have some pen pals, from foreign countries preferred, but don't you pals from U. S. fall back on me. Very fond of swimming, ice skating and dancing. Will send souvenirs and snapshots. Get busy, you lonesome girls.

LORETTO.

I am a young man of thirty, not hard to look at, and am interested in music, art, literature and personalities. I am a chemist and would like to hear from boys in Massachusetts, Connecticut and New York. GERRY OF MASS.

I wonder if any one would write to an artist. I like travel and therefore would like to hear from far distant countries and especially sailors. I love sports; my favorites are swimming and football. Do I like to dance? Don't ask. I am nineteen and five feet six. My hair is brown, but I can't tell you the color of my eyes as I don't know. They're changeable. I can promise drawings and other surprises.

KAY OF THE WINDY CITY.

I'm a blonde considered good-looking. Just five feet two—go in for all sports, especially dancing, tennis, swimming and roller-skating. I also drive a car and dote over animals, except for two kinds. Can you guess what they are? The best of luck to your wonderful club.

JINGO.

A lonesome boy of the Windy City would like especially to hear from gobs in some far continent as I like tales of adventure. I don't claim to be an artist at writing letters, but I'll do my best. I'm nineteen, weigh 140, am five feet seven, have blue eyes and brown hair, and am not bad to look at. So come on, gobs, give me a treat. Snap out of it. I want to hear from every one in the U. S. Navy, whether you're here or abroad. I promise you a big surprise when you answer this S O S. EDDIE OF CHICAGO.

I'm just sixteen, dark hair, blue eyes and five feet four. I am a modern girl and go to parties and enjoy all kinds of sports. I want more than anything to make new friends, so don't forget me.

JEWELL.

I often find myself lonesome—a girl eighteen, light wavy hair and large brown eyes. I'm five feet three, weigh 115, considered good-looking. I love all outdoor sports and am especially fond of dancing. Come on now, everybody from eighteen to twenty-five or older.

BROWN EYES.

I am eighteen, and am trying to be a nurse. But I am very lonesome when I am working. So please, Mrs. Dale, have some girls write to me soon. Send me their picture and I will send them mine. A LONESOME OHIO PAL.

After many debates with myself pro and con, I have risked my all on this effort. Have been a reader of ALL-STORY since the first issue, unless I was in some foreign port where magazines are scarce. Soldiers of fortune in search of rainbow's end are ever lonesome despite all tales to the contrary, and especially so for a link or tie which binds them to their mother country. May I find through your columns a pen pal or mate to dispel this jinx? Can promise interesting, truthful tales of danger, romance and adventure in distant places, and who knows? Maybe I'll be able to take my pal along on my next jaunt which starts some time in October or sooner if Doc pronounces me okay before then. I want a pal from eighteen to thirty-five, with a yen for the great wide spaces and the unknown. Some one from our crowded, noisy cities who longs to clear their lungs of dust, smoke and microbes as they breathe the ozone, perfumed with tropic odors and tang of seas. Come on, folks, give

us your troubles, wants and heartaches for a voodoo charm never known to fail, at the cost of a two-cent stamp. VETERAN.

I wonder if I'd be allowed to join your Lonesome Club. You seem to have letters only from people up to thirty. I hope I'm wrong; I just love to correspond and by chance make somebody or more than one happy. I am forty years old, very fair of hair and skin, and a very happy disposition, always thoroughly happy when making somebody else happy. I was married very young and have my husband, two very nice boys and a very quick and sensible daughter. Although very young, she is married and has two lovely little kiddies. I am so young in my ways and looks that I am taken to be my daughter's sister instead of mother. I live in the suburbs and have a very happy and lovely home. While I have my children and grandchildren, don't think I am not lonesome at times. They are not always with me, and I have a lot of spare time to myself with nothing to do. Hoping my letter may interest some one from thirty-five to forty years old who may have lonesome moments, too, and we might share them.

HELEN OF NEW JERSEY.

The best way I can describe myself is to tell you the character analysis of my handwriting. So here goes: "You are rather emotional and possess a lively imagination and are rather critical at times. You are of an affectionate and demonstrative nature, quick to show your likes and dislikes, and are rather cautious and capable of keeping your own counsel, despite the fact that you are a bit talkative and may seem free to others." Oh, yes—I like to dance, and attend two or three a week. But, best of all, I just love sports of all kinds—especially swimming and skating. I am seventeen, just graduated from high school, have brown hair, dark brown eyes, and am four feet eleven. MENE FROM MINNESOTA.

Come on, every one! Write to a healthy, happy girl of twenty, who is five feet one, has dark brown hair and eyes and a pretty complexion, and who is positively expiring for want of pen pals. All letters answered immediately, and I'll exchange snapshots—all kinds of them. I'll even send you a snap of me in my bathing suit if you will only hurry.

PEPPIE PEGGIE.

Girl of eighteen, five feet one, dark wavy hair and brown eyes, considered quite good-looking. I love all outdoor sports, but dancing best of all. I have been used to large cities, so living in a small town I find it very lonesome.

PEEWEE OF RIO GRANDE VALLEY.

A modern girl of seventeen, with light brown curly hair, shoulder length, blue eyes, a tanned skin, and I am called good-looking. I am a regular out-of-door girl, for I love sports, especially swimming and canoeing. By the way, I'm like others in the world, the golf-bugs have got me, for I just love golf. In the warmest of weather you can find me at the golf links. I also dance and play tennis. I am a senior in high school and later will be a freshman at Oberlin College. I'm studying vocal and piano, the subjects on which I am planning my career. My goal is grand opera. All those who have a radio tune in some time on WSMK, Dayton, Ohio, as I broadcast. I think I've told enough about myself, so now I want to hear about you. Come on, all of you, and write to HAPPY OF DAYTON.

A girl of twenty-three, of the Jewish faith, reddish-brown hair, five feet two. Am fond of sports, books, movies and music and fancywork. Best of all, I like to receive and write letters. I am a character reader. Here's praying that they give the postman an extra bag to carry my letters from all my friends.

ANN OF OTTAWA.

I have never traveled much and would like to hear from some of the pen pals and hear about the city or country in which they live. I am a girl with dark brown hair, brown eyes, seventeen, weigh 115, and am five feet four. I am fond of all sports, especially basket ball, baseball, swimming and dancing. I also read a great deal. So come on, pen pals, exchange snapshots with A MONTREAL PEN PAL.

I have quite a bit of time for writing letters. I have traveled through eight countries in Europe. Am very fond of sports, especially basket ball, swimming, baseball and dancing. I am eighteen, brown hair and brown eyes, five feet five, weigh 116. Prefer reading and enjoy camping.

L. C. OF MONTREAL.

Wanted: Pen pals from here, there and everywhere to correspond with a Pennsylvania miss. I am in my sixteenth year, a blonde with blue eyes. I take interest in anything and everything that modern folks do. Please apply for position as my pen pal. MISS MADGE.

I'm a girl of nineteen, with light brown hair (naturally curly), blue eyes, five feet five and weigh 135. Am a modern girl and enjoy all sports. Play the piano and uke, and love reading. I want more than anything to make new friends, so hurry and write to me—I mean *you!*

ALBERTA OF INDIANA.

I'm a big girl from a big State, five feet eight, twenty-four, never been outside of Texas. I am interested in travel, sports, etc. I am studying Spanish, but will correspond with girls of any nationality anywhere, and would like to exchange newspapers. JULIA OF FORT WORTH.

I am nineteen, and in high school. I am very lonely and would love to hear from girls all over the world. I have dark brown hair, brown eyes and dark complexion.

PAULINE FROM ARKANSAS.

May I become a member of your club? Hope so. Any objections, friends? No! Thanks—that's fine. Now, come one, come all, I want tons, yes, tons, of letters from all over the world. Don't want much, do I? So you all want a description of me? No—you won't get it unless

you write. Want a clew? I am a girl. Want to find out something else about me? You know what to do. THE WAITING KITTEN.

I simply adore ALL-STORY. Please, oh, please, find me some pen pals. I want as many letters as I can get, don't care how many. Come on, girls, just write to me, and I'm sure you'll never regret it. I am fifteen, with very dark brown hair and eyes. I live in New Mexico and can tell you some interesting things. Write soon; don't fail me. LIZZIE.

I am a young girl almost twenty, five feet two and weigh 108. I have brown hair and dark blue eyes, and a very light complexion. I am very jolly and believe in having good times. I love to swim, dance, go to shows; but most of all getting acquainted with new friends, and traveling. A TRUE K. C. PAL.

I am a young girl in search of pen pals from all over the world. The lure of adventure and excitement and wandering is in my blood, but I have never traveled, although I mean to some day. I love the deserts, the mountains, the wild jungle places where there might be adventure; that's why I want to write to girls all over the world. A DREAM PAL.

I am sixteen, and have blond hair with very dark blue eyes. I am five feet six and weigh 125, so the story goes. My greatest desire is to have pen pals, and whatever their number they shall all be answered. I just simply love to dance and I certainly would die if I didn't have a bathing suit and a great watery space. Could you possibly find some pen pals for

EILEEN OF GRAND BEACH?

A girl of eighteen, brown hair and gray eyes and love all kinds of sports, especially swimming. I will exchange snapshots and answer all letters; so hoping to have my mail box full soon,

BABS OF W. VA.

I am an ardent reader of your Lonesome Club. I am a cook by trade, which indicates long hours, but have plenty of time for writing letters. I have traveled extensively in Asia and Russia, also Hawaii, but never in Europe.

H. K. OF SAN DIEGO.

I have brown wavy hair and blue eyes, five feet eleven and weigh 175. I am very fond of riding, tennis, swimming and especially fond of aviation. So come on, everybody who is interested in aviation, and write to

WEBFOOT OF OREGON.

I am five feet ten and weigh 169. I have dark wavy hair and brown eyes. I like to swim, play tennis and golf, and I am very much interested in aviation. Will gladly answer all letters as soon as received. BUDDY OF OREGON.

May I squeeze in? I am a lonesome brunette of sixteen summers and how many winters? I am five feet five, dark eyes, light complexion and a great sense of humor. Weigh 115, and love dancing, music, literature, sports, etc. Just about everything that makes life interesting.

LILY OF MASS.

Am a married woman, twenty-three, with a thirteen-months-old baby girl. My only amusements are the radio and magazines, so you see I'm pretty blue and lonesome at times. If there is any one as lonesome as I am please write to

TOOTS OF S. D.

I am a girl of fifteen, five feet four, blond, blue eyes and fair complexion. I play violin and piano. Enjoy playing tennis, baseball and all out-of-door sports. As I have no brothers or sisters I'd be so glad to hear from anybody near my age. I enjoy stamp collecting and would exchange stamps. SMILES OF NEW YORK.

I am a sailor boy, age twenty, blue eyes, brown hair, light complexion. Weigh 159 and like all sports, and I would like to hear from any one who cares to write, and promise to answer all letters. I have been from coast to coast and border to border and am on the Mexican border now. A LONESOME SAILOR BOY.

Just another lonesome girl longing for pen pals. Five feet three, weigh 110, have dark brown hair and eyes and a fair complexion. Write to me, every one, and I'll answer. Oh, yes, I almost forgot to say I'm fourteen years old.

BROWN-EYED WEST VIRGINIAN.

Sock! Biff! Hello, everybody! It's just I trying to break in on the Lonesome Club to find some peppy pen pals. I am fifteen, five feet six, and weigh 110. I have black hair, dark eyes, and long fringy eyelashes. I am very fond of anything I like, including writing to you and all outdoor sports. Crash! There goes the curtain. I am off-stage now.

GERTIE OF PA.

Please hand over the "mike" to me a few moments. I'm a slim girl, with dark flashing eyes and light curly hair. I'm five feet four and weigh 110. I'm fond of reading and writing. Sometimes I write short stories and create funny little poems. I am very fond of outdoor sports, especially swimming. Come on, girls, and write to me. I am sixteen in September. You know, sweet sixteen and never kissed. Here is the "mike" again, Mrs. Dale. Thank you very much.

SWEETIE.

A girl past sixteen, five feet six, blue eyes and blond hair. Weigh 125. Everybody from everywhere write to KISSES OF IOWA.

I am raring to be some one's pen pal. I want hundreds of 'em. I am a girl of thirteen, live in the grand old State of New Mexico, and could tell you many interesting things. I'd like to have pen pals from the ages of twelve to fifteen.

GINGER.

Just another lonesome girl wishing for pen pals. Please not let the W. P. B. get my letter, for I'd so much like to see it in print as my first letter, and I know I could write some interesting letters

about Arizona. I am twenty-one, light brown air (boyish bob), blue eyes and five feet seven, weigh 150 and fond of all sports; but dancing and motoring I love best.

LONESOME BOBBY.

I am a girl, five feet five, weigh about 110. I am a "dizzy" blonde, blue eyes and I am very much freckled. My hair is tousled and disheveled most of the time. And sixteen, too! All right, old hombres, please write soon.

SHIRLEY OF THE HILLTOP.

Station K-A-Y broadcasting on a wave length of five hundred motorcycles. The announcer is wondering if you can get her a few pen pals as she has plenty of spare time. I want to hear from all of you. Am seventeen and will tell you the rest when you write. C'mon, gang, and let me show how I can sling ink!

KAY, THE WHOOPEE KID.

Girl of eighteen, five feet five, weigh 121. I have Titian bobbed hair and fair complexion. I will answer letters from everywhere and every one, old or young. Speedy replies, too. Oh, yes, won't you married girls write, too? All those who like to read letters, write to

RUTHIE FROM "GUESS WHERE."

Would any one write to a little girl eleven years old? Here is what I look like, so watch out. Height, four feet six. Weight, 97. White, green eyes, light brown hair, and the rest isn't worth mentioning. I don't know how to play golf, tennis, etc., but I think I'd like to. I don't know how to swim, but I love the water. I ride horseback when I get a chance. I will receive letters from people as young and as old as they make 'em. BIG TOE ANNIE.

Wanted: Pen pals my age in the Lonesome Club of ALL-STORY—give descriptions, etc.—come out, be game—especially any one interested in dahlias, music, etc. I'm a lonesome widow sixty years young, living all alone in my little home in the country. Weight 188, five feet five, dark brown eyes, dark brown and gray wavy hair, big and fat and jolly, English descent, raised Protestant, believe in the Golden Rule and love music, motoring, camping and other sports. Will tell of early days here among the Indians. Had one chase me with an ax in his hand when coming home from school. Believe me, I did some running. Well, pals, write to a lonesome widow of the Wolverine State.

LONESOME WIDOW.

I am sixteen, have brown hair and blue eyes, tall. I love to read books, especially ALL-STORY, and I like to see a good movie. Don't pass me by. Every one calls me "Irish," so won't you, too? IRISH OF GENESEO.

I'm a widow of thirty-one, about five feet, weigh 142. I have brown hair and blue eyes and light complexion. I like outdoor life, especially camping out in summer. A friend and I went on a two weeks' trip this summer; camped out and sure enjoyed it. I am very lonesome since my husband died, and would like to find some pen friends. I will answer all letters.

LONESOME ONE OF IDAHO.

Who would like to hear from a nurse? Here is your chance, so come one and all and take your pen in hand and scratch off a line to a girl that loves to write letters. I am a girl of twenty, have dark brown hair and eyes, and I've dark complexion. All my pals call me Happy, so you can judge my disposition for yourself. Will exchange snaps. (I am not a snapshot collector.) I expect to find my mail box full to overflowing.

HAPPY OF ILL.

Stop, look and read. Right this way, ladies and gents. Always room for one more pen pal. I am seventeen, brown hair and eyes. Like swimming, dancing and in fact most any sport. I am a junior in high school. Will be glad to exchange snapshots. Also will send pictures of Indians to the first people to write to me.

BILLY OF WILD WEST.

Hello, everybody! How about a few pen pals? I am, what you may say, lonely and would like to hear from people any age all over the U. S. Maybe you'd like to know something about me. I am five feet five, weigh 124, blue eyes, light complexion, and blond, natural curly hair. I like to dance and am interested in all outdoor sports. I will exchange photos with any one. I am considered rather pretty by the boys of my home town, but their consideration is not yours. So let's have some letters and hear your opinion. Here's hoping you like me. Oh, I almost forgot. I am a girl of sixteen.

BLUE EYES OF KY.

A girl five feet two, weigh about 98, have brown hair and eyes, am good-looking. Will every one who writes please send their snapshots, and I'll send one in return? Everybody write, from the ages of fifteen to one hundred. And here's something that might interest you. I've met Charles "Buddy" Rogers in person. Will tell you all about him. Please write.

SONNY BOY.

Hello, everybody. Would you like to write to me? I am twenty-three, five feet seven, weigh 107, green eyes, black curly hair and medium complexion. I'm interested in most anything—just love to dance, play tennis and love the water. I'm not lonely, but I do like making new friends. Are you game? HONEY.

Hope you can find me some good friends in the male sex. I am a young man twenty-six, have brown eyes and hair. I like yachting best of all sports, although all sports are good. I own two cars and do a considerable lot of riding. I would like some friends in and around New York City where occasionally we could visit and go riding. BUDDY SMITH.

Will you please, or will you not, help a lonely Australian girl of fifteen with hazel eyes, dark

brown hair and is five feet three, and who is medium looking? I am a good dancer and rider and also love animals, music and reading. I would like some pen pals who are jolly and are good sports to write to.

LONELY BUDDY.

I am fifteen, and have blond hair and blue eyes. Although I am only five feet one inch, I weigh 105. Am interested in all sports.

SALLY.

A lonesome girl of sixteen, five feet four, with blond curly hair and brown eyes. I love to dance and swim and play tennis and basket ball. Would like to get letters from all over the country, and I promise to answer all letters received and exchange snapshots. JUDY.

I am a girl of seventeen and want lots of pen pals. I am fond of all kinds of sports, such as dancing, swimming, horseback riding and aviation. I am very lonesome here where I live and want something to do. I am five feet four, and weigh about 105. Have light yellow hair and brown eyes. So come on, everybody, and write to

BLONDIE OF MASS.

What's your hobby? Mine's seeing how fast a car can go. Whoopee! Who likes excitement? I do! I'm just a blonde with sky-blue eyes and five feet six. Come on, snap it up! I want letters galore! Tell it all to SPEED.

Have you room for one more in your club? Please say yes, for I'm a terribly lonesome lassie of seventeen. I'm a Titian type, with a dash of freckles—not too many—"lazy" gray eyes, and a snappy figure. I'm five feet two, and weigh about 104. If you don't believe it, I'll prove it by a snapshot when I hear from you. I graduated from high school in June, and my hobbies are swimming and reading—and writing letters. That's my past and present in a nutshell.

LONESOME WICKIE,
Mississippi.

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If you wish to have your handwriting analyzed by John Fraser, or your astrological question answered by Carol Young, just fill out the coupon below and forward it to the address given. But remember—one coupon must accompany each request for service. If you wish to take advantage of all four services offered, send four coupons. For handwriting analysis a stamped, addressed envelope must be inclosed.

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